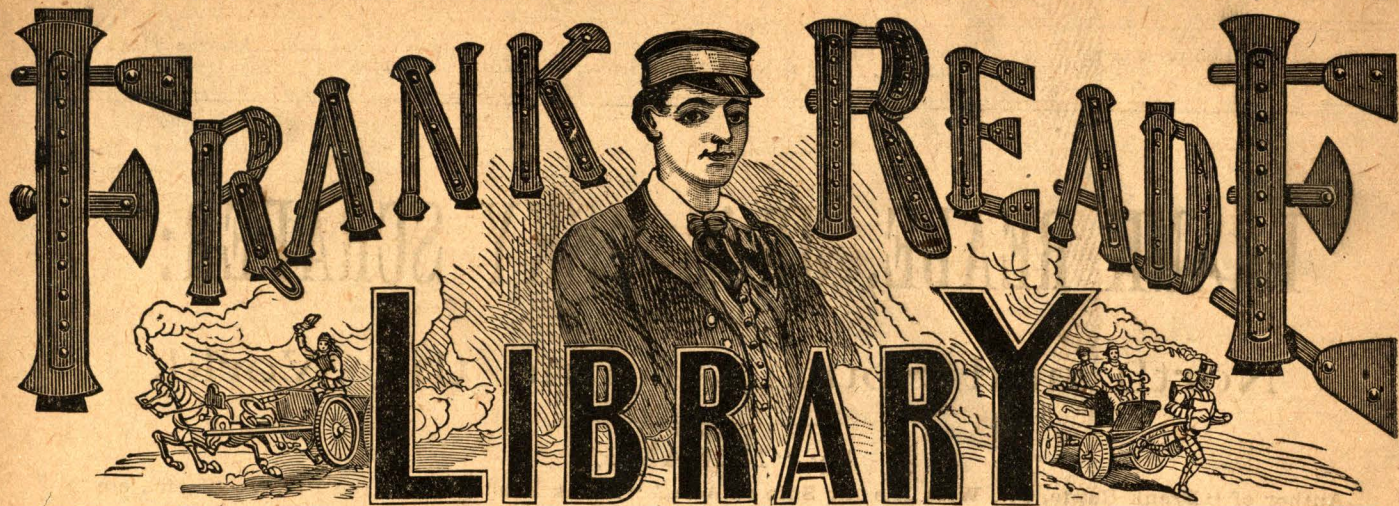


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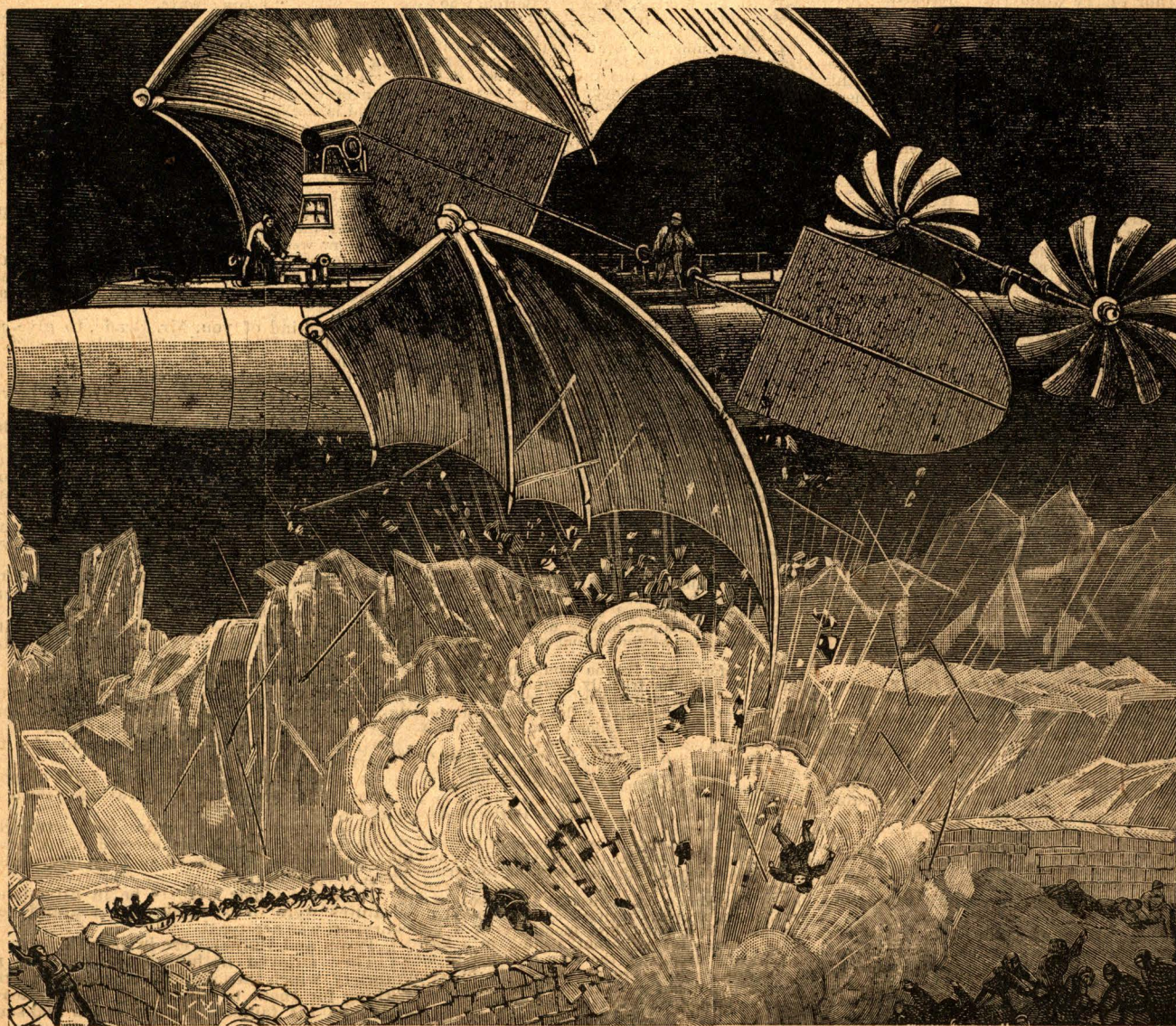


Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, October 5, 1892.

No. 98. { COMPLETE. } FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 31 & 35 NORTH MOORE STREET, NEW YORK. { PRICE } Vol. IV.
New York, January 11, 1895. ISSUED WEEKLY. { 5 CENTS. }

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s "SKY SCRAPER;" or, North and South Around the World. By "NONAME."



Frank produced a small electric bomb of his own manufacture. This he dropped upon the rampart of the Kaymucks' ice fortress. The effect was thrilling. It tumbled to pieces in a jiffy with the explosion, and the natives there concealed tumbled out into daylight an astonished crowd.

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FRANK READE, JR.'S "SKY SCRAPER:"

OR,

North and South Around the World.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His Air Ship in Asia," "Frank Reade, Jr., in the Far West," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A TRAGIC TALE.

ONE bright June morning in a recent year, the newspapers of the world received a startling bit of intelligence, which threw scientists, engineers and inventors into a state of the greatest excitement. Everywhere, at home, in the clubs, the shops, the places of business or the street corners, the theme became the one topic of discussion.

The world over, no name was better known to fame than that of Frank Reade, Jr., a distinguished young American inventor, who was the author of the wonderful Submarine Boat, the Electric Man, the Air-Ship and many other wonderful products of genius.

The most that was known of him personally, was that he was wealthy and lived in sumptuous style in the city of Readestown, where his ancestors had resided for a number of generations.

His only traveling companions upon his wonderful voyages by air or water, were a negro called Pomp, an Irishman named Barney O'Shea and Dr. Vaneyke, a scientist whose name was widely known.

The news, which had so agitated the newspaper world, was to the effect that the young inventor had just completed his new air-ship the "Sky Scrapper," and that in it he intended to perform a most extraordinary feat, namely the journey from north to south around the world.

Small wonder therefore was it that great interest was aroused in all circles.

For centuries futile efforts had been made to solve the mystery of the poles. Hundreds of valuable lives had been sacrificed and millions spent in the effort. But thus far no success had been gained.

Now, however, it seemed as if the wonderful feat was about to be surely accomplished.

With his wonderful air-ship, capable of maintaining a great speed, and of carrying provisions for an extended length of time, it seemed certain that Frank Reade, Jr., would succeed.

Of course there were many incalculable perils to consider.

The terrible cold of the Arctic which might paralyze the delicate machinery, the storms of warm latitudes which might wreck the "Sky Scrapper," and in fact other things too numerous to recount.

Yet the young inventor was ready to take the risk and so made the announcement.

This was the signal for the letting loose of a flood of correspondence which fairly deluged the young inventor, and the most of which was of no relative importance whatever.

Cranks wrote insinuating and threatening epistles. Young millionaires offered fabulous sums for a berth aboard the "Sky Scrapper."

Business men wanted to negotiate for the opening of trade, or the distributing of patent medicine advertisements in the far off parts of the world. Scientific institutes and bodies beseeched the privilege of sending a representative along.

In fact, no branch of trade, industry, science or sport neglected an application. Frank Reade in despair turned to his secretary, who was nearly dead from over-work:

"Why don't people use good sense?" he said.

"Why, it would take the resources of ten na-

tions and a million air-ships to accede to all their demands. Really, it is absurd!"

But among the correspondence there were some letters to which Frank gave heed. One of them read as follows:

"SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE,"

Washington, D. C.

DEAR FRANK:

"I am hastening all preparations for our departure. I expect to be in Readestown ready to start within three days. To-day a case was presented to me, which has strongly enlisted my sympathy, and I am sure will yours. No doubt you remember the mysterious Barton murder in New York a few years ago. James Barton, a young broker in Wall street, lived with his brother, Alexander Barton, who was married and extremely wealthy and swam with his beautiful wife in the cream of society.

"You remember the circumstances of the affair. Alexander Barton was found horribly butchered in his room. His wife at the time was absent at Cape May. Every effort was made to secure the assassin. To the best of belief and backed by strong evidence, the murderer was no other than James Barton, the brother, who disappeared that very night, and no clue to his whereabouts could be found. All over the world quest was made for him.

"Then, to add to the mystery, the murdered man's wife declared that she believed in James' innocence. This brought to light a report that there had been a collusion between the two to put Alexander out of the way, secure his money and so forth. The police adopted this theory, but friends of the family assert that it is false.

"A year ago, to the amazement of the whole country, James Barton turned up in New York. He came from Sweden in the steerage of an emigrant steamer, by which he had taken passage for home after what had been certainly, if true, a most terrible experience.

"His story is a thrilling one. The night of the murder he had arrived upon the scene just in time to see his brother assassinated by a man whom he described as the captain of a whaling ship, then at anchor in the harbor.

"Captain Rhines had acquired a bitter hatred for Alexander on account of a difference in business matters, and while engaged in settling up a question concerning a mortgage on his ship, Rhines lost his temper and struck Barton with a sailor's knife. He then butchered him. James Barton at once gave chase and pursued Rhines to the wharves. Here he was trapped by a number of the crew and taken aboard the ship Modoc, which at once sailed for the Arctic.

"At first Rhines intended to hang his prisoner at the yard, but he adopted a more devilish scheme. When the ship reached high latitudes in Davis Straits, he put Barton ashore upon a frigid coast and with a bitter winter coming on. Then he sailed away.

"The unfortunate Barton would have perished had it not been for friendly Esquimaux. For two months he lived with them. Then one day some native hunters a hundred miles to the south found a party of shipwrecked sailors, who were in a starving condition and living in ice huts.

"Barton at once started to their rescue with dogs and sledges. What was his amazement, upon reaching the spot, to find that they were no others than the crew of the Modoc. The ship had struck an iceberg and gone down shortly after Barton had been so cruelly deserted.

"And of the party, all were dead of starvation save Rhines. He was at the point of death, and in that state made a full confession of the crime of killing Alexander Barton. This, for safe keeping, James buried in a cairn just at the base of a cliff by the sea, properly written and witnessed upon a strip of fox skin. Two months later a vessel picked Barton up while out fishing in a kayak, and, as the master of the ship objected to making a stop, he was brought safely to St. Johns, Newfoundland, but without the confession, which, however, he did not deem that he needed.

"From there he took a coaster for Portland, but

was wrecked and picked up by a Swedish bark and carried to Christiana. Here he embarked as an emigrant and finally set foot in New York.

"What was his surprise to be at once arrested upon the charge of his brother's murder. In vain he protested his innocence. He was tried and convicted and sentenced to be hanged, with a respite of eight months.

"Two of the eight months have gone. Now I have no doubt of his innocence, and if that written confession of Rhines' could be found, the poor fellow could go free. He has given me the latitude as near as I can remember it.

"I am anxious to do all I can for him, and, with your permission, on our way to the Pole we will look for the cairn. Hoping to see you at an early day, I am, my dear friend,

"Yours always,

"JAMES VANEYKE, M. D."

Frank read this strange, pathetic and thrilling tale with not a little of interest.

"Upon my word!" he muttered, "that shall be attended to. The most awful thing in the world is the hanging of an innocent man."

He was at the moment in his library. Suddenly the door opened. A comical looking dandy as black as a coal stood on the threshold.

"Well, Pomp!" said the young inventor. "What is it?"

"Ise jes' gwine fo' to say, sah, dat dar am a lady jes' outside as wants to see yo', sah."

"Very well!" said Frank. "Show her in!"

A moment later there crossed the threshold a woman dressed in black, whose anguished trouble lined face yet showed marks of rare beauty.

"It is kind of you, Mr. Reade, to give me this audience!" she said. "Here is my card."

Frank glanced at it.

"Mrs. Alexander Barton!"

He gave a violent start. Then he bowed politely.

"Pray have a seat, madam!" he said. "What can I do for you?"

We will not dwell upon the interview which followed. Mrs. Barton rehearsed the story of her sorrows, and plead for James whom she believed innocent.

"Oh, sir!" she said earnestly, "if you can find that cairn and the written confession, you will save his life!"

"Madam," said Frank, with deep feeling, "I can only say that I will make the attempt. No stone shall be left unturned."

She expressed her gratitude and then withdrew. Frank was more than ordinarily interested in the affair.

He was resolved that no effort should be spared to save James Barton. With this, the matter was for a time dropped. Other matters now engrossed the attention of all.

Great preparations were being made for the start of the Sky Scrapper.

It was to be an event of no light importance. The whole country was agog with interest.

Readestown was overrun with strangers who wanted to see the ascension. A grand programme of exercises had been prepared by the town officials.

Bands of music were to be in attendance, salutes were to be fired, and a grand celebration was arranged.

Pomp and Barney were in their element.

They enjoyed nothing more than the notoriety which they gained. It was also a great thing for them to accompany Frank Reade, Jr., on his famous journey north and south

around the world. The two were the best of friends, and deeply attached to each other, though ever engaged in friendly nagging and practical jokes.

"Shure, yez black monkey!" Barney cried, "I don't know whativer Mистер Frank wants fer take the loikes av yez along wid him. Shure, its mighty little sunlight we'll have an ther way."

"Wha' will I hab to do wif dat?" sputtered Pomp.

"Shure, an' don't yez know that black clouds shuts out the loight av the sun?"

Pomp picked up an old shoe and hurled it at the Celt. It took him fairly in his open, laughing mug, and caused him to turn a back somersault.

"Don' yo' gib dis chile none ob yo' sass!" cried Pomp with mock wrath. "I brek your jaw jes de same as ole Samson slew de Philistines. Don' yo' fo'get dat, honey!"

"Tare an' ounds!" gasped Barney, regaining his feet. "It's a ruction yez want, do yez? Have at yez!"

The Celt made a rush at the darky. He had the old shoe in his hand and hurled it back. It struck Pomp full on his skull with a crack like a breaking lathe, but the darky only grinned.

"Look out dar, chile!" he yelled. "Jes' clar de track!"

Then he lowered his head quick as a flash. It took Barney in the pit of the stomach and the Celt went down with a dull thud.

"Hi, hi, hi!" laughed Pomp, holding on to his sides. "Wha' yo' fink ob dat, chile?"

Barney, gasping, sprang furiously to his feet and started for his tormentor. What would have been the end it is hard to say, but at that moment Frank Reade appeared upon the scene.

In a jiffy the two jokers had vanished in opposite directions.

Both were very busy about their duties. They did not have time for further frolic just then.

CHAPTER II.

EN ROUTE FOR THE ARCTIC.

FRANK READE, JR., had a companion with him. This was a hale, vigorous and pleasant featured old gentleman.

He wore glasses and a beard white as snow. It was no other than Dr. Vaneyke, the distinguished scientist.

"I tell you the Sky Scrapper is the best of all yet," Frank said, enthusiastically. "You will see a beauty, Vaneyke."

"I am glad of that, my dear boy," said the scientist, cheerily. "You know how happy I am in your success."

They passed through the yard of the great machine shops and came to a structure which had the appearance of being a temporary building.

The vast iron doors were closed, but Frank opened a small door and they passed in.

The glass roof let in plenty of light, and there resting upon wooden piers Dr. Vaneyke saw the new invention.

He gazed at it spellbound for a moment and then exclaimed:

"Upon my word, Frank, this is rightly named the Sky Scrapper. It is the greatest invention yet."

"Do you think so?" said Frank with pleasure. "Let me explain its structure to you."

And this he proceeded to do.

The Sky Scrapper was in shape much after the lines of a mackerel, being long and cylindrical, with a hull of the best and lightest thin rolled platinum.

Upon its upper surface was a long, flat and narrow deck, with a hand rail extending all about it.

In the center of this deck was a small dome, which also held a powerful electric light, capable of illuminating objects two miles distant as plain as day.

Upon the forward part of the deck was an electric gun, an invention of Frank's, and a terrible weapon, as the reader shall learn in the course of the story.

The motive power of the Sky Scrapper consisted of two powerful fan-like screw propellers in the stern, operated by electric machinery on the inside.

The elevating power was two sets of wings, operated by powerful electrical force. The forward wings were built in sections, like the wings of a bat, and having a vast concave surface were capable of a mighty lifting power. The after wings were fan like and intended to balance the air-ship.

This is a crude and inadequate description of the exterior of the Sky Scrapper. Frank now took the doctor below decks.

Into the Sky Scrapper's cabin they went. This was a wonderful place. No cabin could have been more sumptuously furnished for the size of it.

There were rich carpets and delicate paintings on panel and ceiling, cases of books, of scientific instruments, maps, charts, and other necessary things.

Just beyond this was a small compartment known as the armory. Here was a stand of small arms, the latest pattern of shell carrying rifles and ammunition.

The next compartment was a series of small staterooms with sleeping berths. Beyond this was the engine room, where the wonderful electrical machinery was.

Dr. Vaneyke spent a full hour attentively examining this. Its like he had never dreamed of.

Then the engine room was left and they entered the galley or Pomp's kingdom where he exercised his expert knowledge of culinary art to the great satisfaction of his patrons.

This constituted the interior of the Sky Scrapper. Certainly it was a wonderful piece of work, and to be credited only to a master mind.

Dr. Vaneyke expressed his satisfaction and delight in glowing terms.

"Only think of it, my dear boy!" he said. "I am the envied of all my brother scientists. I am in luck. Think what vast knowledge I shall gain, and what important discoveries I shall make!"

"I hope you will, Friend Vaneyke?" said Frank, warmly, "then you will be on hand to start early in the morning."

"I will!"

The next day was an eventful one for Readestown.

The city was crowded with strangers, and enthusiasts. When the hour came for the ascension the excitement was intense.

Thousands of people crowded about the machine shops. At the appointed hour the Sky Scrapper was run out of the shop on trunnions.

Then once in the open air, Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke went on board.

The band struck up, cannon were fired, and Dr. Vaneyke at the rail waved the American flag.

Then Frank stepped into the dome, which served as the pilot-house, and touched an electric key.

There was a slight buzzing from the dynamos, then the huge wings began to beat the air, the Sky Scrapper rose softly, and with the ease and grace of a royal eagle. Up, up it soared far above the world, and hung a thousand feet over the city.

The air was filled with blazing rockets, the din from below was something terrific. Frank fired a salute from the electric gun, then the Sky Scrapper started on its thrilling voyage.

Soon the air-ship had left the city out of sight.

The panorama spread below as the air-ship sped on its flight was something wonderful to behold.

Hills and valleys, lakes and rivers, cities, hamlets and towns all were passed over.

Crowds of people were seen viewing with wonder the famous air-ship.

The Sky Scrapper made rapid time to the northward. The Great Lakes were passed over, the St. Lawrence river and the Canadian country.

Then civilization began to be left behind. The vast wilderness opened up, and the change of scenery was very marked.

The great forest tract, extending even to the shores of Hudson's Bay and known as Rupert's Land, began to open up.

Only three days had been consumed in this mighty journey.

The Sky Scrapper had been making very rapid time.

Frank was now decided to go slower and take note of the country as he did so. This was partly on Dr. Vaneyke's account.

The famous scientist was busy constantly in taking notes.

Finally, one morning, the air-ship hung over a wild and beautiful valley.

There were a chain of lakes, a river, sparkling brooks teeming with speckled trout, marshes peopled with beaver, and forests filled with game, and which extended back to the base of mighty mountains, upon whose sum-

mits glaciers gleamed in strange contrast with the verdure far below.

This was to Dr. Vaneyke a rich field for the study of flora and fauna.

Moreover, Barney and Pomp were itching to go upon a hunting excursion. They had seen deer, bears, black foxes, and many fur bearing animals. They could hardly wait to get a shot at them.

So Frank decided to descend with the Sky Scrapper for a brief time. The great air-ship settled down, and finally rested upon a soft bed of moss at the foot of a high precipice.

No sign of human life had been seen. It was not believed that the region was often visited by man.

"The climate is doubtless too rigorous," said Dr. Vaneyke.

Barney and Pomp were the first to tumble over the rail and indulge in a few somersaults on the soft moss.

It seemed good to once more set foot on terra firma, after several days in mid-air.

The Sky Scrapper was firmly anchored. Then Frank and Barney climbed the heights near to reconnoiter.

They saw only a mighty expanse of unbroken wilderness.

There was no sign whatever of human life. Far to the northward was a long, dark and forbidding line.

This claimed Barney's attention at once, and he cried:

"Shure, sah, an' phwat wud yez be afther calling that?"

"That is the Height of Land!" said Frank.

"Beyond that all is muchly unexplored, and it comprises a mighty territory extending to the Hudson's Straits on the north and Labrador on the east!"

Returning to the air-ship it was decided that it would be safe to leave the Sky Scrapper safely anchored where she was for a time so that the hunt might be indulged in.

Accordingly the anchors were put out and made secure.

Then Barney brought out the rifles. Frank took two, one a long Winchester and the other an elephant rifle.

Dr. Vaneyke took a Winchester as did Barney and Pomp.

It was decided not to go if possible far out of sight of the Sky Scrapper's pennant. Even at that limited distance there would seem to be plenty of game.

Barney was the first to start anything. Pushing through some brush a beautiful specimen of the wood antelope leaped into view.

Quick as a flash Barney flung up his rifle and pulled the trigger.

There was a sharp crack, the bullet went straight to the mark, and the antelope fell.

The Irishman gave a yell of delight.

"Shure an' phwat a purty little beast!" he cried. "It was almost a shame fer to shoot it, but it's foine eating it'll make."

The others had separated and Frank Reade located the trail of a moose. This was game which at once claimed his whole interest, and he speedily became forgetful of everything else in his excitement.

For miles he followed the scent and suddenly came within range of a magnificent specimen of the moose.

The animal was drinking at a spring in the woods. Frank drew careful aim and fired.

The bullet struck the moose just under the fore-shoulder and at once brought him down with a cleft heart. Excited beyond measure, the young inventor sprang forward to secure his prize.

Of course it was out of the question for him to return, carrying the huge animal, so he sliced off as much of the best meat as he could carry and started on the return.

He had no difficulty in retracing his steps, but it was quite dark when he saw the lights of the Sky Scrapper.

A short while later Frank was on board. Dr. Vaneyke and Barney were there, but Pomp had not returned.

Nothing had been seen of the darky since the start that morning. But yet no great fear was felt, until as the hours passed, it became evident that he was not likely to return.

What did it mean? All began to wax anxious. Midnight came and passed. What had happened to Pomp? Had harm come to him or had he become lost in the wilds?

However this was, Frank Reade, Jr., was in a very anxious state of mind and decided at once to take steps to learn the fate of the faithful negro.

But this proved no light task.

CHAPTER III.

TREED BY WOLVES—THE RAFT.

POMP had become separated from the others early in the morning. He struck the trail of a moose as had Frank and followed it zealously for a long time.

He crossed a wide stream by wading up to his armpits, and upon the other side encountered his first calamity.

This was in the shape of a combative lynx.

The animal was upon a bough just above Pomp's head, and unseen by him as he pushed through the brush.

It is not often that these animals will attack a human being. But this specimen of the tribe was undoubtedly half starved and in a very surly frame of mind.

Pomp, intent in getting a shot at the moose, pushed into the brush.

Suddenly he heard a peculiar rustling sound over his head.

Looking up, he received a chill as he saw the cat prepared for a spring. Down it came like a thunderbolt.

It struck Pomp fairly between the shoulders, and with such force that the negro was prostrated.

This was fortunate, for it threw the cat from him, after leaving a few traces of its claws in the darky's back.

Pomp was instantly upon his feet, and the lynx was again upon him. The darky had not time to use his rifle.

He dropped it and whipped out a knife.

Quick as a flash he caught the animal by the throat. The darky was powerful and agile, and though the lynx half clawed his clothing off him, Pomp held on.

The knife was used with terrific force. Again and again Pomp thrust it into the animal's body. A few such doses sufficed. The lynx gave up the ghost.

Pomp was somewhat used up with the encounter.

His clothing hung in shreds and he was covered with blood. But a closer examination revealed the fact that he had no serious wound. For this he was thankful.

"Golly!" he muttered. "I done fink dis chile bettah go back home and wash hisse'f up. Dat was a drefful nasty animile fo' to handle."

With this resolve Pomp started to retrace his steps to the Sky Scraper.

He forded the river again and kept on for some while. But the further he went the less familiar the surroundings looked.

Finally he came to a halt.

"Dat am berry funny!" he muttered, perplexedly. "Dis chile am jes' turned around. I'se dead suah I'se never been heah befo'."

Convinced of this the darky concluded to climb a tree and get his bearings again.

This he did, and as he believed located the cliff, at the base of which was the Sky Scraper.

He made a straight line for this. There was no path, and the course was through the worst wilderness he had ever seen.

"Golly sakes!" he muttered, after hours of trailing in the dense brush. "I'se done got to fink aftah all dat dis chile am putty nigh lost fo' a fac!"

But still he pressed on.

Suddenly the cliff loomed up before him. He burst through the underbrush and came out at its base.

The place for an instant looked familiar. It was certainly similar to the spot where the Sky Scraper had been left. But the air-ship was not there.

In a moment Pomp saw his fatal error.

He had mistaken the locality. Where the Sky Scraper really was he could not even guess. It was probably miles away in another direction.

He was lost.

It was by no means a pleasant reflection. The situation was really fast assuming a serious aspect.

Night was at hand. The sun had gone down and dark shadows were creeping over the land.

What was to be done? The darky experienced a chill.

"Golly!" he muttered, "dis chile am jes' bad off an' no mistake. If I goes trampin' round in dem woods some mo' I jes' get lost wuss den ever."

He climbed the cliff and tried to locate the Sky Scraper.

But this was in vain. He shouted and fired his rifle. No answer came back. He was in despair.

The darkness began to grow thicker. Pomp's superstitious fears began to assert themselves. He trembled like a leaf and wailed:

"Massy sakes, wha' eber am gwine to be-come ob dis chile? Shuah I'se done fo' dis time. De ghostes dey just come an' tote dis chile away."

Pomp was plucky enough in corporeal matters, but, in common with his race, he was vastly superstitious and afraid of the spiritual.

The shadows in the forest to him assumed forms and shapes of a spectral kind. He crept into a crevice of the cliff and prepared to spend the night.

But he was not to remain in this position long undisturbed.

In coming through the woods blood had dropped from his wounds in various places. This had caught the keen scent of the hungry wolves which at night so thickly peopled the forest.

They were now coming hot upon the darky's trail.

Pomp heard their long, mournful howls, and knew what they meant. He was shivering in actual terror.

But yet he was not devoid of a certain presence of mind. Common sense taught him that it would never do for him to remain in his present position.

So he adopted what was the best and the only plan under the circumstances. Near by was a tall pine tree. Pomp sprang up among the branches of this.

He was not a moment too soon. The wolves came howling about the base of the tree. But Pomp was beyond their reach.

And there the darky remained perched through the long night hours.

Beneath him were a myriad of fiery eyeballs and flashing teeth. In vain the snarling pack tried to reach him.

When the morning light came at last they slunk away, and the darky ventured to descend.

He was much worn out with his sleepless night's experience. But he knew the prime necessity of finding the Sky Scraper. So he at once set out through the wilds.

He proceeded in the direction which he deemed proper. For hours he toiled on. Then suddenly, when his heart had begun to fail him, he chanced to gaze skyward.

He gave a great shout of joy. There was the Sky Scraper, far up in the blue ether. It seemed hovering there, and Pomp rightly guessed that Frank was looking for him.

The overjoyed darky gained a barren eminence near, and did all he could to attract attention.

He was successful. The Sky Scraper suddenly bore down toward him, and he saw a man on the deck waving a flag.

It was Dr. Vaneyke. The air-ship descended, and a few minutes later Pomp was pulled aboard half dead from exhaustion.

His story was heard with interest. All were glad to find him alive, and Dr. Vaneyke dressed his wounds.

Barney seemed the most tickled of any.

"Be jabbers!" he cried. "I'm mighty glad yez are alove, lad. Shure, we'd given yez up intirely, an' that wudn't do, fer I hev a smart score agin ye. I mane to pay up, to be shure."

"Don' yo' be too suah, f'ish," said Pomp, with twinkling eyes. "Dat amn't gwine fo' to be so drefful easy."

The spirits of all were lively once more, and Frank headed the air-ship more to the eastward.

"I mean to strike the ocean just above Newfoundland," he declared. "Then I shall travel north into Davis Straits and look for the cairn."

The Sky Scraper made fast time over the vast wilderness, and one morning the Atlantic Ocean broke into view, with its tossing, storm-driven waters.

It was a day peculiar to those tempestuous latitudes. Black clouds filled the sky, jagged lightning played, and the sea was in billows mountains high.

Frank let the air-ship run out to sea until far out of sight of land. Then he changed the course to the northward.

Thus far not a sailing vessel had been seen, but now suddenly Dr. Vaneyke, who was on the lookout, cried:

"My God! look down, Frank. There is a shipwrecked party on a raft."

The young inventor sprang to the rail. It needed but a glance for him to see the thrilling truth.

There, pitching in the trough of the sea was a raft made of spars and wreckage. Upon it were four persons.

Three were men and one was a slender young girl whose beautiful pallid face could be seen upturned with wonder and hope to the air-ship. By her side was a white-bearded old man. The other two men were younger.

Instantly Frank brought the air-ship about. The sea was pitching so high however that he did not dare to descend and pick the castaways up. How were they to be rescued? Frank hit upon an idea.

"One of us must go down there on a rope," he declared.

At once Barney sprang forward.

"Shure, sor, an' let me be the wan to go!" he cried.

So a strong line was brought and fastened about Barney's waist. Another line was also provided by which to draw the castaways one at a time aboard the Sky Scraper.

Barney went over the rail and was lowered down. His body was caught by the squall and he swayed so violently that he did not seem likely to reach the raft. It was a moment of great peril.

CHAPTER IV.

IN ARCTIC REGIONS.

THE position of Barney, swinging violently in the gale, was a perilous one. If the rope should break, or he should lose his hold, he would be engulfed in the raging waters.

Those clinging to the raft watched him with frightened interest. It required the full force of the dynamos to hold the air-ship steady against the wind.

But there came a sudden lull in the breeze.

Down slid Barney. He was now right over the raft. The white bearded old man caught his legs dangling in the air, and drew him safely down.

In a moment the rope was fastened to the raft, which anchored the air-ship and kept it steady.

"Thank God! We shall be saved!" cried the old man, wildly. "But who are you, and what sort of a wonderful invention have you there which can travel in the air?"

"Shure an' haven't yez iver heard av Frank Reade afore?" cried Barney; "he's the great American invintor, an' that is his latest the Sky Scraper."

"Well, I should say so!" cried the old man. "It is rightly named. Are you sure the air-ship will hold us all up?"

Barney laughed at this.

"Niver yez moind about that," he cried. "Shure do yez see that rope ladder coming down to yez? Catch on to that an' go up."

The old man grasped Barney's hand.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Shure it's Barney O'Shea, an' it's an honest man, I am!"

"You look it. Well, I am Otis Vance, this is my daughter Sybil. This gentleman is Mr. Wallace Dane, and the other Jack Mains, honest seaman of the steamer Aurelian, wrecked in midocean by a gale."

"Shure I'm glad to know all of yez!" cried Barney, tipping his cap to the young lady, "but yez must be afther climbing up that rope an' no foolin' about it."

Wallace Dane, a dark complexioned sullen-looking young man, was the first to ascend the rope ladder.

Up he went and presently reached the air-ship's deck and was welcomed by Frank and Dr. Vaneyke.

Then Jack Mains, the sailor, went up like a monkey and Otis Vance followed. Barney then fastened the rope which secured the raft about Sybil Vance, and sprung onto the rope ladder himself.

Up he went with agility, while Sybil was drawn safely up by Frank and Pomp.

All were now safely on board, and introductions were quickly in order.

The story of the shipwrecked party was soon told. They were passengers on a steamer for England, when the storm blew them from their course, and the ship foundered. Most of the crew were drowned, but they managed to cling to the raft and weather the gale.

Otis Vance was a millionaire of New York, and his daughter Sybil was a prominent society girl. Wallace Dane was a young man of leisure, and as Frank Reade guessed, a suitor for her hand.

The rescued party were conscious of a novel sensation at being aboard the air-ship.

It was to them like a dream, and they were wonderstruck at the appointments and the mechanism of the Sky Scraper.

"At last t'ie dream of centuries is realized!"

cried Otis Vance. "We have mastered the art of flying, thanks to Mr. Reade."

"Oh, I wish I could travel around the world upon this beautiful craft!" sighed Sybil.

"We are now on our way from north to south around the world," declared Frank.

"Oh, I wish I was one of the fortunate party."

"I fear that would not be possible, daughter," said the millionaire. "By the way, Mr. Reade, we are making you no end of trouble. Just drop us at the nearest point in civilization."

"Where were you bound?" asked Frank.

"For England."

"I will then take you to some good port in Sweden—say Stockholm—and you can then go safely on your way."

"We will consider you an everlasting benefactor," said Mr. Vance, warmly.

But certain incidents were near at hand which were destined to overthrow this well laid plan of the travelers.

Barney and Pomp had been busy keeping the Sky Scraper level before a powerful current of air which had suddenly arisen.

Frank saw at a glance as soon as he came on deck that there was danger ahead.

The air had grown dark, the sky was heavy hung, and the masses of black clouds on the horizon were indications of a blow.

And it came sooner than expected. There was hardly time to prepare for it.

The ocean below was lifted in great masses of foam. But it was speedily lost sight of in the mighty cloud of rain and sleet which burst over the air-ship.

The Sky Scraper was whirled and hurled onward through space like a puppet. In vain the huge wings strove to battle with the air.

On and on, faster and faster she raced before the mighty blast. For hours she kept on thus.

Barney and Pomp were hanging to the propeller lever, and doing their best to keep the ship right side up. This was no easy matter.

The passengers were all huddled in the cabin. Frank was earnestly looking for a let up. But the wind seemed to grow stronger, the tempest yet raged and the Sky Scraper raced before it.

The castaways were all terrified and much afraid that the air-ship would be dashed to pieces. But Frank said:

"There is little danger of that. We are at too great an altitude to collide, and as long as the wings work she will keep up. But we will be blown clear into the Arctic if this continues."

"You may be obliged yet to take us with you as passengers," laughed Sybil.

"I am afraid you would soon tire of it," said Frank, "but if we are driven into the Arctic I should be compelled to ask you to wait until I have performed a certain mission before carrying you to Sweden."

"Certainly," agreed Otis Vance. "You are very kind."

"That mission," continued Frank, "you will realize the importance of when I tell it to you."

With this, he told the story of the murder, of the confession of Captain Rhines and of the arrest and imprisonment of James Barton.

Sybil Vance's face was deadly pale and her voice shook as she replied:

"We are well familiar with that story, Mr. Reade."

"Ah! maybe, then, you know this young Barton?" asked Frank.

"We know him well!" replied Sybil, tensely.

"And before God there is no doubt of his innocence."

"Indeed, I believe it!" agreed Frank. "You can now understand why I am so anxious to secure the written confession of Rhines."

"Pray God that you may and save the life of an innocent man!" said Sybil, devoutly.

The young inventor was deeply impressed with the manner in which Sybil received the news of the mission of the Sky Scraper. His was a keen, penetrating nature.

"I am not far wrong," he muttered, "or she knows that Barton well. I will wager he is a lover."

The matter being called up in Dane's hearing once though, the latter said with a sort of savage emphasis:

"It is all foolish sentiment in regard to this Barton. The story of Rhines and the confession in the cairn is rot. He is guilty beyond all doubt and should hang."

Sybil Vance turned upon him with flashing eyes and haughty demeanor.

"And I maintain his innocence!" she cried, grandly. "I shall defend him forever, for I

knew him too well. James Barton is one of the noblest young men on earth!"

Dane muttered something like a curse under his breath and walked away. Frank noted all this and drew his conclusions.

"Now I believe him innocent," he reflected, "and it shall be my effort to prove it if only for the sake of that little fairy Sybil who I know loves him."

The hurricane blew fiercely for three days. In all that time the Sky Scraper was hardly able to put her nose against the wind. It was evident that they were running into the Arctic.

Frank Reade realized that he was apt to have his four passengers on his hands for some while yet.

Mains made himself extremely useful about the air-ship. He became great friends with Barney and Pomp.

On the third day the storm cleared. Then, riding high in the frosty air, those on board the Sky Scraper looked down upon an astounding sight.

There, spread below, was the region of ice and snow.

As far as the eye could reach was one vast expanse of frozen seas and mighty icebergs. It was a novel spectacle.

"Where are we?" gasped Mr. Vance. "Upon my word, this looks like the North Pole."

"We are not so very far from the region contiguous to it," said Frank.

"Well, it looks as if we were on your hands now for a sure thing, Mr. Reade."

"Do not worry about that," said Frank, pleasantly. "You are very welcome company."

Frank now got out his instruments, and catching the sun at the right moment, got his bearings.

"We are not far from the main channel of Davis Strait," he declared. "It is not far to the spot where is supposed to be located the cairn for which we are looking."

"I pray you may find it safely, and also the confession!" cried Sybil, eagerly.

"We shall hope to," replied Frank.

The scene spread below was a novel one to many on board the Sky Scraper. Indeed, to Barney and Pomp it was enticing.

They were both fond of hunting, and the variety of game visible below was allurement enough.

Upon the ice cakes by holes in the ice were seals. White bears were seen at a distance lumbering across the ice field. Anon a black fox would go scurrying among the pack of bergs, stranded upon the shore or the frozen sea.

Water fowls were plenty in various little open bodies of water in the distance. In spite of the lack of human life in the region, there was nothing lonely or dreary at all in the outlook, so plentiful was game.

There were some little repairs to be made upon the delicate electrical machinery.

Nobody could do that but Frank himself, so he anchored the Sky Scraper at a height of about three hundred feet. Here the air ship rested, being supported by undulations of the winds.

Even Dane and Mr. Vance himself were interested in the scene below.

Sybil was as desirous as any of descending, and finally the subject was broached to Frank Reade, Jr.

"You may all go!" he said, readily. "I will descend and let you get out. When you want to call me down again, just blow a whistle which I will give you!"

Each was provided with a treble whistle. Then Frank let the air-ship descend.

Barney and Pomp and Jack Mains were all eager to get a shot at the game. Each carried a rifle.

Dane and Vance were armed, but they were not so eager for hunting. With Sybil they walked about the ice field for some time.

The three eager hunters had passed from view long since in pursuit of some foxes.

The Sky Scraper hung in the sky overhead like a huge bird. While Sybil and her escorts traversed the ice field. She was desirous of visiting a distant ice pinnacle which jutted from a berg. Exciting incidents were thereby entailed.

CHAPTER V.

EXCITING ADVENTURES.

HAD either Mr. Vance or Dane realized the risk of their undertaking they might well have shrank from it.

But they did not. It was some little distance to the berg.

As they walked on Dane drew them into a con-

versation, in which for a time they were so engrossed that they did not give great heed as to where their footsteps were carrying them.

"Evidently they intend to clear young Barton if they can," he remarked, with a sidelong glance at Sybil.

She picked up the gantlet at once.

"I sincerely hope they will," she said.

"I am inclined to the belief that the young man is innocent," affirmed Mr. Vance.

Dane laughed scornfully.

"I have heard of gullible people, but I have never seen your equal," he declared.

"What would you have us do?" flashed Sybil. "Condemn him without a fair trial?"

"He has been fairly tried and proven certainly guilty."

"Proven guilty by what evidence?"

"The most direct of circumstances!"

"Ah, that is no evidence at all. If they will accept his story, or if he only had the means to prove it, what would or could his traducers say?"

Sybil spoke firmly, resolutely, and without a tremor in her voice. Her whole manner was eagerness and excitement, and implied a conviction of the right.

Dane's face was as black as a thunder cloud. The pangs of a bitter jealousy were gnawing at his heart.

"I suppose this distinguished inventor of air-ships is expected to find that wonderful confession in the cairn?" he said.

"Yes!" replied Sybil. "And I feel sure that he will!"

"He never will!"

"What?"

"I say that he never will!"

He spoke decisively, and with savage, exulting emphasis. Sybil glanced at him as if she would read the significance of his words.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Because it is not there!"

"Who has taken it away?"

It was a keen, penetrating look which she gave him. Dane gave a violent start, and averted his gaze.

"Taken it away!" he muttered. "Why, it was never there I will wager my life."

Sybil drew a deep breath.

"I feel sure that Mr. Reade will find it," she said, confidently.

Dane gritted his teeth savagely and said:

"I have no doubt that will make you happy. I can read your heart like a printed book. You are in love with this young scapegrace. You will believe in him against the world."

"Yes," Sybil replied, firmly. "I will always believe in James Barton. He is noble and pure and good. Nothing will change me."

"Time will tell!" gritted Dane.

The subject then was changed. They were now near the iceberg. Mr. Vance was a trifle in advance when a sharp cry escaped his lips.

"Look out!" he shouted, leaping backward. "There is danger ahead!"

This was instantly apparent. From a crevice in the berg a giant specimen of the white bear had emerged.

He was a savage brute, and reared upon his hinder legs came straight for the three explorers.

The sight of his white, gleaming teeth, his red, frothing jaws and glaring eyes terrified Sybil.

She gave a little scream and retreated a step.

Dane fired his rifle and beat an unceremonious retreat. The bullet, however, did more harm than good.

It only wounded the bear and increased his fury. Before Mr. Vance could get out of the way the brute was upon him.

Only those who have faced the Arctic bear can have a correct idea of his power and ferocity.

The grizzly of the Rockies is scarcely more formidable. Mr. Vance had not time to think before he was in the brute's embrace.

His first impulse was to writhe out of the bear's grip.

But this he quickly found impossible. The brute's claws lacerated the flesh of his shoulders, and in another moment his huge jaws would have closed upon the unfortunate man's arm but for prompt action.

Quick as a flash Vance threw up the butt of his rifle and jammed it into the bear's throat.

It was his salvation. As the brute tried to eject the object he naturally relaxed his grip. Then Mr. Vance slipped out of it.

But Sybil had been wildly screaming for help.

The young girl firmly believed that her father

had reached the end of his career, and that he would never be able to escape from the bear's clutches.

"Oh, go to his aid for God's sake!" she appealed to Dane. "Do not let him be killed!"

But the villain did not seem inclined to adopt this method. The truth was, cowardice was one of the prevailing elements of his nature. He was afraid of the big bear. On the other hand, secretly he hoped that Mr. Vance would really fall a victim to the brute's jaws.

Frenzied with the awful horror of the situation, Sybil did not wait longer for him to act. She carried a small rifle, which she knew well how to use, and mustering up courage started to her father's assistance.

Just as Mr. Vance had thrust the butt of his gun into the bear's mouth, Sybil reached the spot.

Fearlessly she rushed forward and placing the muzzle of her rifle close to the brute's fur, pulled the trigger.

As luck had it, the ball struck a rib and glancing upward entered the brute's heart. The battle was ended.

With an almost human-like groan, the big bear reeled and sank lifeless upon the ice. Mr. Vance staggered back, pallid and bleeding, and saw Sybil standing before him, with the smoking rifle in her hands.

"Father!" she cried wildly, dropping the gun and rushing to his side. "You are not badly hurt?"

"No, my child," replied Otis Vance, happily, "but you saved my life."

"Heaven be praised for that!"

Dane now came up and tried to apologize for his cowardice. The father and daughter listened, but made no comment. The villain saw at once that their estimate of him was decidedly a poor one.

But now that the danger was over, their spirits arose.

The bear was a beautiful specimen of its kind, and Sybil cried:

"Oh, what a beautiful mat its fine white fur would make! Why can we not take it home with us, father?"

"We can and will," replied Mr. Vance, drawing a hunting knife. "I have skinned deer and buffalo, and I ought to be able to flay a bear."

And in a very short space of time the millionaire had skillfully removed the bear's hide. In this operation Dane condescended to lend some assistance.

When this had been accomplished a return was made to the air-ship. The whistles were blown, and Frank lowered the Sky Scaper and they climbed aboard.

Quite a lively gale had sprung up, and the air-ship was tugging hard at her anchor. Nothing was to be seen of the hunting party, Barney and Pomp and Jack Mains.

And, indeed, they were experiencing some remarkable adventures.

With the enthusiasm natural to born lovers of sport, they had followed the trails of numerous wild animals, without any thought as to the distance they were going from the air-ship.

Soon they had gone so far that it was hidden from view by the high ranges of ice hummocks.

It was no light job to clamber about over the slippery and rough piles and blocks of ice, many of them mountainous in size.

There were little beaten paths between these made by the foxes and wolves. Generally the party kept in these paths.

They passed plenty of small game, but they ignored it.

"Bejabers, it's a bear or a brace av the black foxes I want!" cried Barney. "Shure nothin' else will suit me."

"Don' yo' be too high toned, I'ish," sniffed Pomp, availing himself of an opportunity to nag Barney as usual. "Yo' will jes' play in big luck if yo' shoots one of dem lily bits of rabbits."

Jack Mains roared in sailor fashion.

"Blow me, mates!" he cried, "ye are both better at slinging mud than ye are at hunting, I figger it."

"Beggorra, an' av I don't shoot as much as any av ye I'll eat meself," retorted Barney, tartly.

"Huh! I don' believe yo' cud hit dat ar ice hummock yonder."

Pomp pointed to what seemed to be a round topped heap of snow on top of a hummock fifty yards distant. Barney instantly halted.

"Put up or shet up!" he cried. "I'll bet yez the drinks I kin do it."

"Fall to, mates!" roared Jack Mains. "Get

a lay on and mind your weather eye. That's no ice hummock!"

But neither heeded this speech. Pomp for mischief, cried:

"I jes' take dat bet, I'ish! It will be de drinks on yo' dis time!"

"Divil a bit!" cried Barney. "Whurra, wud yez luk at the snow fly!"

And the snow did fly, but not the kind Barney had calculated on. Quick as a flash he drew aim at the supposed hummock and fired.

Crack!

Something did fly, but it was not snow, but white fur. The supposed snow was nothing less than a white bear, crouching there with his back to them.

Jack Mains' keen eyesight had detected this at once. It was in order for Barney and Pomp to be astonished.

The Celt nearly dropped his gun as the bear, with a long, drawn howl, rose upon his hind legs.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" he yelled. "Phwat the divil is it? Shure an' it's dhramin' I am or it's a white bear!"

"Golly, fo' glory!" sputtered Pomp. "It am jus' dat. Look out fo' yo'self, chilluns. Hyar de chap comes fo' us!"

Indeed, there was but just time to gain a vantage ground.

Down the slope came the wounded and maddened bear. Straight for his foes he made.

They had climbed upon a shelf of ice, and none too soon.

"Foire!" roared Barney. "Give it to the baste. Shure, he'll ate up the whole av us!"

Jack Mains aimed at the bear's eye and fired. But the bullet merely glanced off the brute's thick skull.

It caused it to hesitate for a moment, however, and this gave Pomp a chance. The darky fired.

His shot struck the bear just under the shoulder blade. Another bullet from Barney cut a hole in the brute's abdomen. The giant bear sank down and expired.

With cheers of delight the three hunters dashed down the slope and proceeded to skin their prize.

They had barely succeeded in this when the air was broken with long-drawn wails. Over the ice hummocks came a myriad of white forms.

Snarling, yelping, with flashing eyes and reeking jaws they came. Barney gave a yell and picked up his rifle.

"Howly smoke!" he cried. "Look out fer yezself, boyees. Av it ain't a hull pack av white wolves."

This was the truth. The Arctic wolf has not the fear for man of its southern prototype. More than two hundred of the savage animals attracted by the scent of blood, came rushing upon the scene.

There was but one thing for the hunters to do, and this was to beat a retreat, which they did in haste.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ESQUIMAUX.

ONLY one thing saved the hunters from attack by the Arctic wolves and certain death.

The carcass of the bear was in their path, and the pack stopped to devour it. The three hunters made rapid tracks for the ice plain beyond.

A short while later they reached it.

Their ardor was for the time dampened, and it was decided to return to the Sky Scaper.

The air ship could be seen rocking at its anchor, and Barney saw a blue flag hanging down. He knew that it was the summons for a return.

"Shure, an' Misther Frank is signaling for us!" he cried. "It's back we must go."

"Dis chile am agreeable," said Pomp.

"That's my reckoning," agreed Mains.

So they started across the ice plain for the air ship.

But they had not traversed half the distance when terrible howls in their rear told them the ominous truth that the white wolves were coming.

They were for a moment the victims of a fearful terror.

And well they might yield to fear.

Should the wolves overtake them it was more than likely that they would be torn to pieces in a twinkling.

"Beggorra, run fer the loife av yez!" yelled Barney. "Run, ye omadhouns!"

But neither Jack nor Pomp needed prompting. Both realized the danger as well as Barney.

On over the ice plain they ran with full speed. The wolves were coming with the speed of the wind.

It needed but a glance to see that they would be overtaken before they could reach the air-ship.

But those on board the Sky Scaper now had seen the peril of the party. Frank Reade was quick to act.

He rushed into the cabin and came out with two rifles of his own invention. They looked like blunderbusses so large were the barrels, but they were really powerful rifles throwing a deadly explosive shell.

Frank threw one of the rifles to Otis Vance and cried:

"Fire into the midst of the wolves! Take good aim!"

"God help them!" screamed Sybil, in awful terror, "the wolves will overtake them!"

But Frank threw one of the rifles to his shoulder and fired. The shell struck in the midst of the pack.

It exploded with terrific effect. Several of the wolves were killed. This was the best possible thing that could have been done.

Instantly the ravenous horde were engaged in tearing to pieces the dead wolves. This caused a brief delay.

Then Vance fired.

Several more of the wolves were thus killed. Every moment the party were drawing nearer to the air-ship.

Now they were just beneath it.

Frank had let down a long rope ladder. Just in time they reached it, and one after another sprang up it.

The wolves were just beneath. But the three fugitives were in mid air beyond their reach.

Up the ladder they went, and were soon clambering over the rail. It had been a close call, but they were safe now.

"Phew!" gasped Barney, as he tumbled on deck. "Shure I thought it was the ind av me fer sure."

"Golly! dis chile don't want no mo' ob dat kin' ob hunting!" declared Pomp, while Jack Mains was non-committal.

After mutual congratulations had been indulged in, Frank Reade declared:

"Now we must make search for the cairn in which is hidden the confession of Captain Rhines. After that is found we will try and take you all back to civilization."

All were agreeable to this save Wallace Dane.

The villain demurred quite vigorously.

"It is all rank nonsense!" he declared. "You will find no confession there. I would not yield to such hocus-pocus. I am anxious to get to England."

Mr. Vance and Sybil, however, were strongly in favor of searching for the cairn. Slowly the Sky Scaper picked its way northward.

The singular phenomena of the Arctic night now began.

But in due time Frank was able to get his bearings so exactly that he said:

"Within twenty-four hours we shall reach the cairn."

All began to look forward with eager interest to that moment.

Whether the cairn really held the confession or not was a matter of no little curiosity.

But some thrilling incidents were in store before this should be accomplished. The first of these was near at hand.

Barney was on the lookout when a strange sight met his gaze.

In a little valley beneath he suddenly saw a collection of ice huts. There were several hundred of them, and smoke was pouring from some of them.

Fur clad denizens, as broad as they were long were lounging in scores about the place. It was an Esquimaux village.

A sharp cry escaped Barney.

"Shure, Misther Frank!" he shouted, "wud yez luk at the loikes av this!"

Frank was quickly at the rail and said:

"Esquimaux, as I live!"

The young inventor regarded them a moment curiously. Then an idea struck him.

"Perhaps they are the tribe Barton fraternized with," he said. "I will find out."

At once he began to lower the air-ship.

The Sky Scaper settled down slowly and finally rested upon a small hillock near the Esquimaux village.

The Arctic natives at sight of the air-ship seemed greatly excited. A loud uproar arose, and men, women and children came piling out of the huts.

Frank Reade did not for a moment suspect but that they were friendly enough and had no thought of danger, so he said to Barney:

"Come, Barney. Let us go down and talk with them."

As a chill breeze was blowing, the two men wrapped extra furs about them and with their rifles slung over their shoulders left the deck of the Sky Scrapper.

Down the hillock they slid, and at once started toward the Esquimaux, holding up their hands.

The latter were coming swiftly forward, but now of a sudden halted.

Frank took this for an invitation to advance and parley. At about a hundred yards from the concourse of greasy natives both he and Barney stopped.

Then Frank made signs with his hands that he wanted a parley.

The Esquimaux were armed, all with long bone-tipped lances and javelins and war clubs.

Two of them advanced to meet the white visitors. Short, squat and dirty specimens of humanity they were.

As they drew nearer Barney shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Be me sowl, Misther Frank, it's a harrud lookin' lot av spalpeens they are, anyway. Are yez not a bit afraid av thim?"

"I don't think we need be, Barney," said Frank. "At least, we will be on our guard."

The two envoys now approached until twenty feet distant. Then they stood stolidly waiting for the others to speak.

Frank addressed them in Swedish, thinking perhaps they would have caught a smattering of that language from the settlements below.

But they shook their heads, and, to the young inventor's surprise, one of them said in broken English:

"What coom for? Esquimaux man want good whisky. No more."

"Ah, my fine fellow," said Frank, "I am glad you speak my language. I will try and make you some presents after you have answered my questions. Are you the head man of your tribe?"

Something like a gleam of comprehension for a moment flitted across the mobile face of the native. He nodded his head, with a grunt.

"Is there a white man in your village, or have you ever seen one here before?"

The Esquimaux's face clouded and he frowned savagely, saying:

"Inglish man gib whisky quick! Eskimo man kill!"

Then he brandished his war club. Frank attempted a pacific reply, but the whole gang set up a loud yelling.

Then the young inventor saw at once the futility of making friends with this tribe of natives. They were hostile beyond a doubt.

The best thing he could do was to get back to the Sky Scrapper as quickly as possible. Barney pulled his sleeve.

"Whisht, Misther Frank!" he whispered. "Shure yez better not take any chances wid the omadhouns!"

Even as he spoke one of the envoys made a blow at Frank. The other darted his lance at Barney.

It passed through the Celt's coat-sleeve, but quick as a flash Barney snapped it and grappled with his foe.

Frank had dodged the blow with the club, and whirling his rifle aloft, knocked the Esquimaux down. The tribe now came yelling towards them.

The fellow Barney had grappled with was stout, but not quick enough for the Celt, who was an excellent wrestler.

Quick as a flash Barney downed him. Then he and Frank started for the air-ship.

The air was full of flying javelins and clubs, but none of them struck the fleeing men. They reached the air-ship, and a moment later the Sky Scrapper sprang into the air.

But even as the air-ship sprang into space and hung over the scene, a startled cry pealed from the lips of each voyager.

In the valley just beyond a thrilling scene was witnessed.

A white man wrapped in furs and riding upon a sledge drawn by dogs at full speed, was pursued by a dozen other sledge teams driven by Esquimaux.

They were straining every nerve to overtake the white fugitive. It seemed certain that they would, and Frank Reade sprang into the pilot-house.

"Get your rifles, everybody!" he shouted. "We must save that man!"

And pressing the propeller lever, Frank start-

ed the Sky Scrapper forward, intent upon the rescue of the fugitive.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUGITIVE'S STORY—THE FIGHTING ESQUIMAUX.

FORWARD shot the Sky Scrapper in the effort to rescue the flying white fugitive. He was lashing his dogs and the sledge was bounding furiously over the ice plain.

But the Esquimaux seemed to be surely gaining. There was no doubt but that they would overtake him.

This would mean death, and everybody on board the air-ship knew it.

So Frank sent the air-ship forward, until it was right over the flying sledges.

The Esquimaux seemed startled at sight of the Sky Scrapper, and for a moment were disposed to yield to fear.

But the Arctic native is absolutely a stranger to superstitious terror. There is a stolid indifference to all things spiritual or mundane, and nothing stops them in a given course but sheer supremacy of will and muscle.

Frank realized this at once and so he let the air-ship descend until it hung right over the white man's sledge.

Then he shouted some orders to Barney who obeyed them.

The white fugitive regarded the air-ship with more of surprise and misgiving than the Esquimaux had.

At first he had slackened his team but now kept on with his gaze partly fixed upon the air-ship, which settled down until barely fifty feet over his head.

At this altitude Frank gauged the speed of the Sky Scrapper to that of the dogs. Then Barney leaned over the rail and shouted:

"Whisht, aloive down there?"

The driver of the sledge seemed more astonished than ever, and replied:

"An Irishman, by all that's just!"

"And an Oirishman is as good as any other mon," retorted Barney.

"What the deuce have you got there?" shouted the fugitive. "A flying machine?"

"If yez warn't a dunce yed see that at wanst."

"Jupiter and Jericho! that beats me! Where are you from?"

"From Readestown, U. S. A., and the owner av this Skoy Scrapper is Misther Frank Reade, sor, an' if yez will catch on to this we'll relieve yez from yez prisint imbarassmint. Shure, sor."

Down tumbled a rope ladder. The fugitive saw the point and in an instant dropped the reins and grabbed the ladder.

He was whisked out of the sledge like a flash, and up shot the air-ship. Then Barney shouted:

"Hang on an' cloimb up if yez are any kind av a sailor."

Before the fugitive had reached the deck, Frank had regulated the speed of the air ship and was on hand to meet him.

As he came over the rail, he was seen to be a dark-visaged, keen-eyed man of possibly forty years of age. His appearance, so far as facial lines of character went, was not prepossessing.

Frank noted this in the swift, critical glance which he gave him.

But he readily stepped forward and proffered his hand.

"Glad to see you, friend," he said. "I am Frank Reade, Jr., the owner of this air-ship."

"Well," said the rescued man, with a deep drawn breath, "I haven't had such an honor for twenty years. Indeed, I am almost inclined to believe that I am dreaming. You whisked me out of that bad scrape in lively fashion."

"We were in the right time, I think," agreed Frank.

"My name," said the stranger, "is Rafael Orsino, and I belong in London, England. I am up here in the interests of a fur company and have been doing the whale region by sledge. I have found the Esquimaux everywhere friendly but in this locality."

The stranger's manner was frank, ready, and his statement logical enough. Yet something impressed Frank Reade, Jr., he knew not why, that he did not speak the truth.

However, the young inventor said:

"Well, you are welcome to the Sky Scrapper. I am on a voyage north and south around the world, with my men here, Barney and Pomp. These other people, Mr. Vance and his daughter, and Mr. Dane, I picked up from a raft at sea. I shall land them in Stockholm, and will drop you there also, if you wish."

"That will be a favor," declared Orsino, "Glad to meet your friends."

He bowed to Mr. Vance, doffed his hat to Sybil, and then met the gaze of Dane, who was glaring at him.

With a cry of recognition Orsino started forward.

"Why, my old friend—" he began.

But he stopped. Dane turned half away, interrupting him coldly:

"You mistake. I am not acquainted with you, and have never seen you before."

Orsino fell back, bowing apologetically.

"You will pardon me, I know," he cried, "but you so strongly remind me of a friend in London. The likeness is great. But he is an Englishman and you are an American."

Dane bowed curtly. The episode attracted no special notice, nor was any significance attached to it.

The Esquimaux below were yelling furiously and hurling their javelins in the air. But Frank did not heed them and set the course of the air-ship northward.

Soon the yelling horde were left far behind, and the Sky Scrapper swept through space like a bird.

The sensation was a novel and evidently an exciting one to Orsino.

He strode up and down the deck, looked at the ice fields below, shivered and cried:

"Ugh! what if we were to fall?"

"That is hardly likely!" said Frank. "Such a thing is well provided against."

"Oh, I suppose so. Experience will no doubt overcome the feeling of fear I have now."

"You may be sure of it," replied the young inventor.

Orsino went from one part of the air-ship to another. Nothing escaped his keen twinkling eyes. Every part of the machine was noted.

"Well, this is certainly a triumph of genius," he finally admitted. "Really, Mr. Reade, you are the most wonderful man of the day."

Whatever opinion the others had formed of Orsino, Barney and Pomp had acquired an instinctive distrust and dislike of him.

"Shure, it's an evil eye he has," averred Barney. "I niver loike the loikes av it."

"He am jes' a scallewag if dis chile am on de right tip," agreed Pomp.

Frank did not take particular interest in the fellow. He had no fear that he might mean any of them harm, and knew that he would soon be rid of him anyway.

So the Sky Scrapper went on its way for some hours.

There was not much diversity in the landscape below.

The same monotony of ice and snow and open water abounded. Game seemed to be plenty, and the air-ship frequently met great flocks of geese and ducks making flight.

These did not seem afraid of the air-ship, and could have been shot by scores, as they passed within a few feet.

But with such a surfeit of game it was wantonness to shoot them. So they were allowed to pass.

But suddenly a new and startling scene was spread to the view of all. The Sky Scrapper drifted over the summit of an ice mountain, and it lay revealed in the valley below.

It was nothing less than a battle field, with two large bodies of armed men engaged in deadly strife.

The snow was strewn with dead bodies, and it was hard to tell which side really held the advantage.

All rushed to the rail and viewed the scene with varied exclamations.

"How awful!" cried Sybil with a shiver, and turning her gaze away.

"It is a fight for annihilation," declared Frank Reade, Jr.

"We ought to separate them!" cried Mr. Vance, excitedly. "They will exterminate each other."

"Let them do it!" growled Wallace Dane. "They are of no benefit to the world."

But Orsino cried wildly:

"They are the Kaymucks and the Odungys. The Kaymucks are friends of the white man and saved my life. The Odungys are stronger, however, and will whip them. We must save the Kaymucks."

At once sympathy was of course aroused for the Kaymucks. Frank was ever inclined to champion the cause of the weak.

So he decided to make a move at once to save the unfortunate Esquimaux. He called to Barney who was in the pilot-house:

"Slacken speed, and lower the air-ship. Every man get his Winchester."

The order, it is needless to say, was quickly obeyed.

Every one armed himself, and as the air-ship descended, fire was opened upon the Odungys. The Esquimaux seemed amazed at the appearance of the air-ship above them, and for a moment both sides fell back in confusion.

But the Esquimaux is a stranger to fear or superstition. Had it been any other class of natives in the world, no doubt they would have ceased fighting entirely.

But only for a few moments did the Esquimaux with their bull-dog persistency give up the battle.

It was quickly resumed and more fiercely than ever. And the Odungys seemed to have the upper hand and drove the Kaymucks resistlessly before them. It was a critical moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I NEVER FAIL!"

FRANK READE, JR., saw that only the most decisive of action would result in the termination of the battle.

He knew the persistency of the Esquimaux well enough for this.

Only the certain conviction that death would be their lot would cause them to turn back. This was all.

Rapid fire from the Winchesters was opened upon the Odungys.

Orsino showed himself and shouted encouragingly to the Kaymucks. They yelled and fought like demons.

The Odungys were mowed down frightfully by the Winchesters.

It was horrible slaughter, and this Frank did not like.

He was averse to wholesale bloodshed, and dropping his Winchester, rushed into the cabin.

When he came out he had a long coil of wire in his hand. He shouted to his companions:

"Hold on, boys! Give up firing. I have another and better plan."

Of course all complied.

The firing ceased.

The Odungys, evidently believing their white foe's ammunition exhausted, seemed to gain new courage, and returned to the attack more fiercely than ever.

The battle was hotter than at any time. Frank, however, proceeded hastily to carry out his plan.

He donned insulated gloves of rubber. Then one end of the wire was connected with the powerful dynamos.

That part of the wire on board the air-ship was run through glass eyes at different intervals, so that it would not come in contact with any part of the air-ship.

Then the current was turned on and the wire became "live." Everybody knows what a deadly instrument a live wire is.

With his rubber gloves, however, Frank could safely handle it.

He threw it over the rail.

Down went the wire until it trailed upon the ground.

Barney at the wheel was given the order to veer the Sky Scrapper about in various directions.

This enabled the wire to drag through the group of Odungys just beneath. The effect was terrific.

The instant the wire struck one he threw up his arms and fell senseless.

There was not current enough in the wire to necessarily kill those coming in contact, but sufficient to put them into insensibility.

Straight through the Odungy ranks went the wire.

They were laid out right and left in heaps. Some were only slightly shocked, but the experience was so terrible that their valor yielded and they beat a retreat.

Some seeing the wire sought to stay its deadly course by catching hold of it. But they quickly abandoned this plan.

Through the ranks went the deadly wire. The Odungys were thoroughly demoralized.

Seeing the futility of combating such a power, so dreadful and unseen, they gave up and beat a hasty retreat.

The battle was ended.

Cheers went up from those on board the air-ship. The Kaymucks yelled for very joy.

The Odungys abandoned the field entirely. Then the Sky Scrapper descended and a parley was held with the Kaymucks.

Frank had a belief that this tribe was the one with whom Rhines and James Barton had fraternized.

If so, then they ought to know the whereabouts of the cairn and the grave of Rhines. Dr. Vaneyke evidently read Frank's thoughts, for he said:

"I think we had better inquire of this tribe about the cairn!"

"So do I," agreed Frank.

The head man of the tribe, a fat, greasy little fellow, came forward and Frank saluted him. Orsino stood near.

After vainly trying to make the fellow understand him, Frank was about to give up in despair, when Orsino stepped forward.

"I can talk a smattering of their tongue," he said. "I understand the Icelandic and they know it a little."

So Orsino acted as interpreter.

"What I wish to learn," said Frank, "is the fate of certain white men who once sojourned in these parts. One of them left a cairn here with important papers in it. I want, if possible, to find that cairn."

This announcement struck Orsino like an electrical shock. He seemed for a moment startled, and his eyes gleamed peculiarly.

But he quickly recovered, and seeing that Frank had not noticed his emotion, replied:

"I will ask the old fellow what you desire."

Orsino then conversed with the Kaymuck chief in an unintelligible fashion. Presently he turned and said:

"Some white men did live here about a year ago, and one of them left a cairn. It is somewhere on the coast, about twelve miles to the east."

"That settles it!" cried Frank, joyfully. "We will go there at once. If we find it, our mission is accomplished."

"Pray Heaven we may!" said Sybil Vance, fervently.

Orsino turned and regarded the young girl curiously. Every one except Dane seemed pleased that the cairn was located at last.

Frank made the Esquimaux some presents, and then old Kaylo, the Kaymuck chief, was hired to go ahead with his dogs and sledge and show the way to the cairn.

But just as preparations were made for the start, the old chief pointed to the north and shook his head.

Orsino talked with him a moment, and then turning to Frank, said:

"He says that we are in danger of a big blizzard or storm. You know it is about time for the Artic line storm, and it is generally a fearful one. The old man is loth to start for the cairn!"

But Frank was anxious to go, and tried to reason with Kaylo.

The old Esquimaux seemed very stubborn, however, and finally refused flatly.

Frank feigned anger, and stepped aboard the Sky Scrapper.

"We will go alone, then!" he said.

But Orsino said:

"I don't believe I would, Mr. Reade. The old man, I think, is acting wisely. He does not wish to risk his life. Better wait until after the storm."

Thus adjured Frank after consultation with the others concluded to do so.

The Sky Scrapper was allowed to rest upon some ice blocks under the protection of a huge berg. Then all proceeded to make themselves at home in the Kaymuck village.

The sky in the northward was fast growing inkly black.

Already snow flakes were in the air. Yet there was something exhilarating in the cold blast, and the voyagers of the Sky Scrapper proceeded to reap all the enjoyment out of the occasion that they could.

The Esquimaux entered into the same spirit heartily. Some exciting races with dogs and sledges were arranged and Mr. Vance and Sybil with Dr. Vaneyke, Barney and Jack Mains and Pomp went down to see them. Frank went down also.

But Wallace Dane refused to go.

He had grown very sullen in the last few days. Indeed, he eschewed the society of all on board.

Nobody felt particularly slighted at this, and indeed, the majority were rather relieved than otherwise, particularly Sybil.

It so happened that Rafael Orsino was in his stateroom when the party left.

When he came on deck later, it was to find the air-ship deserted. He was not a little surprised.

"That is queer!" he muttered.

He took a turn over the deck and rounding the cabin wall came face to face with Wallace Dane.

For a moment the two men faced each other like statues.

Then in a cautious, cat-like manner, Dane glanced about him.

"At last we are alone!" he said. "I am glad this moment has come."

"Good!" said Orsino, in the same guarded manner. "None of them suspect that we were ever acquainted before."

"I was afraid you would betray me on that first meeting."

"Ah! but I did not know."

"I know, I know. Well, now to business. You got here all safe."

"So you see."

"And you have succeeded?"

Orsino laughed in a rasping way.

"Some months since I left New York," he said. "We stood then in a room of a certain house and you promised me five thousand dollars for the recovery of that confession from the cairn before other hands could claim it. What you want of it I think now I can see."

"Yes," said Dane, in a metallic voice. "That confession would clear James Barton. Once he is cleared, this girl Sybil, whom I have sworn shall be my wife, is lost to me forever. But James Barton dies on the gallows, and my chances are good if you have done your duty and safely robbed that cairn!"

Orsino took a step forward and said, tensely: "I never fail!"

CHAPTER IX.

LOST IN THE STORM.

AN almost animal-like cry of triumph escaped the lips of the villain, Wallace Dane, as he took a step forward.

"Don't trifle with me!" he hoarsely cried. "I want the truth."

"Can't you take so broad a hint?"

"Have you got it?"

"Yes."

"Let me have it."

Dane's right hand was thrust forward, but Orsino stepped back. A flash of rage swept across Dane's brow.

"Why don't you let me have it?" he fiercely cried.

"Don't you know?"

With a hissing cry, Dane clutched at the other's throat.

But Orsino hurled him back.

"Easy," he said, coldly. "You will gain nothing by force."

He was easily more than a match for the other.

Dane saw it, and his fierce manner relaxed. His fox-like attitude came back, and he said, craftily:

"Come, Rafael, you know I'm excited."

"I see you are, and I am willing to fulfill my contract when you do yours."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when you place that five thousand dollars in my hands you shall have the confession."

Dane drew a deep breath. He saw that Orsino did not trust him. If he was a villain he did not regard Dane as any better or more honorable.

"Ah!" said Dane, with feigned carelessness, "you are going to play shrewd with me, are you? Then you think that I would actually be mean enough to take that confession from you and never pay you the money?"

"I assert nothing. Business is business. That's all."

Dane reluctantly drew a package from his pocket.

"I always do as I agree," he said. "If you can't trust me we had better quit company at once. Here is your money. Let's have the parchment."

"Wait a moment!"

Orsino undid the package and counted the crisp American bank bills. There were just five thousand dollars.

"Here it is!" he said, handing a package to Dane.

The latter coolly unrolled it and spread out a sheet of what looked like fox-skin. Upon it was roughly written and signed and witnessed the confession of Captain Rhines.

With a deep breath of satisfaction Dane carefully folded it and concealed it in a pocket next his body.

Then Orsino said carelessly:

"Well, that job is over. Now I think I'll search for the others."

"One moment!"

Dane put forth a detaining hand. Orsino seemed surprised.

"Well!" he said curtly.
 "I want to talk further with you!"
 "Oh, I thought you did not care to have any further business with me."
 "Don't exasperate me. This is very important indeed. It is a chance we cannot afford to lose."

Orsino was silent for a moment. He gazed at Dane as if he would read the other's thoughts.

At this moment a form passed into the cabin at the other end of the air-ship. It was unseen by either villain and was no other than Dr. Vaneyke.

The doctor had returned for his Winchester, for there had been talk among some of the party of a hunt.

He passed into his state-room. The window was on that side of the air-ship, and he heard the voices of Dane and Orsino.

He would not have heeded this, and doubtless would have passed out again without betraying his presence to them, had it not been for an incident.

A sentence dropped by Dane was so thrilling and peculiar as to claim his startled attention. In a moment he felt justified in becoming an eavesdropper.

"The job can be worked as slick as a whistle," Dane was saying. "I tell you it is a big chance. Just think of it. With this air-ship in our possession we can fly to any part of the world."

"But—can we learn to operate it?" exclaimed Orsino, breathlessly.

"Of course we can. I would not be afraid to wager that I could do it now. I have not been idle all these days, and I am always very observant."

"Why, I cannot express myself!" exclaimed Orsino, wildly. "It would be the greatest scheme on earth. How will we be able to do it?"

"Are you afraid to do some pig-sticking?"

Orsino started, and seemed for a moment aghast. Dane laughed shrilly.

"I see you catch my idea," he said. "Well, every one of the gang but one must be dropped overboard with a slit gullet; and that one you can guess."

"The girl?"

"Exactly."

"Whew!" exclaimed Orsino. "You play for big game."

"You see it is my only chance. I must make a *coup de main*. The girl will never consent to marry me. I must force her. There is her father whom we must silence. Then in order to get hold of the air-ship that nigger and Irishman and that old scientific chap must be disposed of. Then there is the sailor, Mains."

"And the hardest man of all to handle is Frank Reade, Jr.," said Orsino.

"Yes. If the girl was only on board, what an excellent opportunity it would be to go off and leave them all."

"I think to wait for such an opportunity would be better than killing them wholesale."
 "Certainly! I don't like such nasty work. But if we cannot work it any other way we must do it!"

"I have a plan!"

"Well?"

"Take them at night. While asleep we can kill every one but the man on guard in the pilot house, and can throw them overboard without his knowing it."

"Splendid! Then you are with me?"

"If I can have my share," said Orsino.

"It is settled!"

"We must work with great care. No mistake must be made. The girl is yours and the air-ship is mine. It is a bargain. Let us drink to success. I have brandy in my cabin!"

Then the precious pair moved away.

Words hardly suffice to describe the horror of Dr. Vaneyke as he listened to this awful revelation of intended crime.

He was for a moment tempted to confront the villains.

Then he realized the folly of this and decided upon a different plan. Frank Reade, Jr., must be notified immediately.

The villains would not act at once. There was time in plenty to circumvent their awful plot.

"I never liked the looks of that Dane, anyway," reflected the doctor. "The best thing I can do is to find Frank at once and tell him all!"

With this resolution he at once left the air-ship, taking care that the two plotters should not see him.

The doctor's mind was so stirred up by the thrilling incidents of the half hour past, that it

was not strange that he should lose his bearings in leaving the air-ship.

He started in what he believed to be the proper direction for the Esquimaux village. But in reality it was in exactly an opposite direction.

It was snowing quite hard and thickening up rapidly, while darkness was growing most intense. The doctor would have turned back sooner but for his zeal to find Frank.

But after a time he came to a halt, satisfied that he had taken the wrong course. He turned back at once.

But though he tramped for hours in the snow, he could not find the air-ship. His position now became a fearful one. The Arctic blizzard had set in full force, and the awful conviction came upon him that he was hopelessly lost. This, he knew, was almost equivalent to certain death, for human life could hardly resist the frightful fall in temperature which was sure to come.

CHAPTER X.

VISIT TO THE CAIRN.

MEANWHILE the party at the Esquimaux village had been having a gay time.

The Kaymucks proved good entertainers and their spirits did not seem at all dimmed by the loss of so many friends in the battle with the Odungys.

All sorts of games and sports were witnessed by the white men. Then Kaylo came to Frank Reade and in sign talk intimated that it would be safer to seek cover until after the storm.

This was coming on with a vengeance and Frank realized that the Esquimaux chief was right.

The Esquimaux crept into their snow huts to hibernate during the blizzard and the whites returned to the air-ship.

Dane and Orsino were in the cabin when the party came aboard.

All was made ready for the storm but no one thought to count noses to see if any one was absent.

So Dr. Vaneyke's absence was not noted at once. The blizzard had set in now in earnest.

Barney and Pomp at Frank's request appeared in the cabin, which was lighted with electricity, as entertainers. Barney had his fiddle and Pomp his banjo.

Comical jokes and songs became the order, and the party made merry while the storm raged.

There was no thought of serious consequences, and, indeed, little any one dreamed that one of their number was at that moment at death's door out in the storm.

Hours passed and still the snow continued to fall. By the aid of the flash light Frank could see that mountains of the feathery substance had fallen.

Mr. Vance and Sybil, as well as Dane and Orsino retired for a few hours' sleep. Frank finally followed suit. This left Barney and Pomp and Jack Mains the sailor to keep watch the rest of the night.

Barney had during the day cooked up a dose for Pomp which he believed would settle the conceit of that worthy for some time.

It was the ducky's custom to spend a short while in the galley bread making every night before retiring.

The galley was a small compartment off the dining-saloon. There were cooking utensils and all the necessary articles for food as well as an electric stove here.

The door which opened into it the ducky kept zealously closed. Barney took advantage of this fact to play his prank.

He secured an empty bag of cloth which he filled with flour. This he secured by hooks just over the door. The mouth of it was secured by an arrangement of strings, which led down the jamb of the door and across it about a foot from the threshold. All was arranged, so that after opening the door, the person who attempted to enter the galley would push against the strings which would cause the flour bag to open.

Barney adjusted this nicely. He let Jack Mains into the secret, and the sailor was delighted.

Some time was spent in the kitchen talking over various topics and smoking.

"I done tole yo' one fing chilluns," Pomp was saying. "Dis chile ain' dead stuck on dese yer Eskimo gals. Dey am wuss nor a reg'lar night hoast!"

"Yez mane a noight-mare!" corrected Barney.

"I jes' means wha' I done say, I'ish!" blustered Pomp.

"Then yez are more ignorant nor I give yez credit for," averred Barney.

"I knows a heap mo' den sich po' trash as yo'!" sniffed Pomp. "An' it am jes' as likely dat dah is night hosses as dat dere is night mares."

This was a poser. Barney was for a moment nonplused. Jack Mains roared.

"Heave him another, lad!" he cried; "there's sea-horses, too, as I can make my davy."

"Begorra!" spluttered Barney, "there may be night horses in Afriky, but they're all mares in ould Oireland!"

"Yah, doan gib me no cheap talk about Ireland," retorted Pomp. "It am jes' a small lily bit of de airth, an' England rules the Irish."

"That's a lie!" roared Barney, brandishing his shillelah, "an' here's defeat to the omadhoun as says so. Shure, Oireland rules England an' Ameriky as well. Luk at the army an' navy. Luk at the successful business men of this glorious—"

But Barney was forced to stop. Pomp, with a deprecatory gesture, had started for the door of the galley.

Barney gave Jack Mains a wink, and both crouched down to watch the fun. Pomp opened the door. What followed was an utter revelation.

A second previous Pomp had been as black as the essence of charcoal. When the flour had ceased its momentary flood, he was from head to foot a living example of a white man.

Flour ran down his back, sifted into his pockets, filled his shirt front, his wool, his eyes, nose, ears and mouth, in short, completely buried him.

For a moment the astounded ducky could not act. Then, as he comprehended the trick and heard the roars of laughter behind, anger got the best of him.

He cleared his vision, and without waiting to sift the flour from his person, started for his tormenter, Barney.

Woe to the unlucky Irishman! Barney tried to beat a retreat, but Pomp caught him in the rear, head down, like a battering ram.

The Celt was fairly driven into a tub of dirty water at the foot of the stairway. In he went, head first.

Nose, mouth, eyes and ears were filled with the vile stuff. When he emerged, spluttering and gasping, Pomp was having his laugh.

The ducky roared with joy.

"Who am got de bes' ob it all?" he yelled. "Hi, hi, hi! I done fink yo' am got yo' pay, F'ish!"

"Bejabbers, I'll kill yez for this when I kin g—git me wind!" spluttered Barney.

But Jack Mains cried between his paroxysms of laughter:

"Avast there, mates! It's a fair deal for both of ye. Call it an even run, square yards, and heave away on a straight course agin."

And the sailor's advice was heeded. Both jokers slunk away to clean up their persons. Later Pomp returned and did his bread making.

Then Barney and Mains retired for the first part of the night, while Pomp kept watch.

The storm yet howled fearfully. But before the hour of morning came it abated.

Pomp went into the pilot house and looked out.

The spectacle was an astounding one. The air-ship seemed literally buried in the snow.

It was many feet in depth and badly drifted. An hour later all were astir on board the air-ship.

Breakfast called all to table, and then for the first time Dr. Vaneyke was missed.

A messenger was sent to his state-room, but he was not to be found. With awful horror Frank realized the truth.

"My God!" he cried. "He was out in that storm and did not come back. He has doubtless frozen to death!"

The pall of silence which fell upon the party was fearful. For some while nobody could speak.

Then Frank aroused himself.

"Search must be made!" he cried. "Come, every able-bodied man!"

All volunteered but Dane. He went to his stateroom. The search party was organized.

A short while later the Esquimaux appeared with their snow-shoes and their dogs. They were pressed into service, and the search at once began.

For half the day it was continued, but not a trace of the missing man could be found.

It was like looking for a particular pebble in

the Great Sahara, or a pin in a haymow. Not the slightest clew could be obtained.

With sorrow and reluctance, Frank was finally obliged to give up the quest.

"Poor Vaneyke!" he said, sorrowfully. "A good man and true. What a pity he has left us. But—God rest his soul!"

And this was the best that Frank could do for him. The next thing was to visit the cairn.

Preparations were at once made. Frank had no doubt but that it would be easily found. He could not recover from the loss of Vaneyke, and hired a gang of Esquimaux to scour the region during his absence.

The Kaymuck chief, with his dogs and sledge, started for the coast.

Over the snow drifts went the Esquimaux team. Frank put the machinery of the Sky Scrapper into motion.

It was easy enough to follow the dogs and sledge. For hours the journey went on.

Later in the day the sea coast was reached. But only a vast field of icebergs could be seen as far as the eye could reach.

The straits were closed for the Arctic winter. But Kaylo soon found the cairn.

A huge pile of stones it was upon a little promontory. It was just now covered with snow.

But this was quickly removed. The stones were dislodged, and the cairn opened.

Frank Reade, Jr., searched the little pit in the earth carefully. A few moldy bits of paper and parchment were all that it contained. The young inventor realized with a thrill of horror that the cairn was empty, and that the confession was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VILLAINS EXPOSED.

It was an awful truth to face. For a moment Frank was speechless.

All were waiting anxiously to see him produce the written parchment. But the young inventor drew back empty-handed.

"My God!" he groaned. "It is gone!"

"Gone!" The dismal ultimatum went from lip to lip. It was an awful thing to consider. That one thing which would save an innocent man from the gallows was gone.

"Very likely it was never there," said Wallace Dane in an incredulous manner.

"There is no doubt but that it was," retorted Frank.

"Ah!" said the villain with his peculiar smile. "Where is it now then?"

Sybil had until now seemed likely to faint. But at these words, she seemed instantly to gather wonderful strength, for springing forward she cried:

"It has been stolen beyond a doubt. It is the purpose of the thief to see that innocent man hang."

Her eyes were upon Dane. But that worthy turned and began to converse languidly with Orsino. The others were silent.

"Yes, it is the work of a fiend!" cried Sybil Vance in agonized tones, "he seeks the life of the man I love. Ah, cold and cruel he is indeed. Murderer he will be if he sees James Barton hang for that deed of which he is not guilty."

"He must not hang!" cried Frank Reade, determinedly. "Do you really think, young lady, that there is ground for belief that the confession was stolen from the cairn for the purpose of hanging James Barton?"

Sybil turned a pallid but resolute face toward the young inventor.

"I know it," she cried with conviction and earnestness. "And there is a man who can tell more about it if he chooses!"

Her finger was pointed at Dane. A sensation was created. The villain's face turned white and red by turns.

"The girl is mad!" he exclaimed. "What do I know about it? What motive would I have in doing such a thing? How could I do it anyway? I can prove an alibi from first to last!"

But Sybil had turned back to the air-ship upon her father's arm. The subject was not pressed further. But Frank Reade, Jr. began to do some tall thinking.

"Ah!" he muttered at length. "I think I can see. This villain is in love with Miss Vance. He hopes to win her by putting Barton out of the way. But who stole the confession, and

He came to a sudden stop. A startled thought flashed across his mind. It caused him to wonder why it had not come to him before.

There was the Italian Rafael Orsino. Had he visited the cairn and abstracted the parchment? Was he after all the hireling of Dane?

A thousand things were recalled by the young inventor now which served to intensify the suspicion that Orsino was the thief.

"If so, then Dane hired him!" he muttered. "Have they destroyed the confession or is it yet in their possession?"

This was not easily answered. Yet Frank was determined to know. Certainly there was some good reason for the accusation made by Sybil Vance.

He saw the plot now as he never had before. The two villains Dane and Orsino had gone aboard the air ship. There was no use in staying longer in the vicinity.

He thought of Dr. Vaneyke. First of all he would search for him and find him dead or alive. Then perhaps some active measure might be taken to compel the villains to give up the confession if it was really in their possession.

All now clambered aboard the Sky Scrapper. Frank was the last, and as he crossed the

rail Mr. Vance came from the cabin where he had left Sybil and said:

"Mr. Reade, I owe you explanations in regard to my daughter's conduct. You will then agree with me that the disappearance of that confession is a very strange thing."

"Indeed I believe you," replied Frank. "I don't think you need explain."

"Allow me to give you a few facts. I knew James Barton as a noble and upright young man. He was to have wedded my daughter. I do not trust Wallace Dane. He has proposed to Sybil and been refused. He was heard to make a threat that he would yet have her."

"Now this Orsino is a cunning rascal. Probably Dane has a grip on him. Learning that the confession of Rhines was in existence and that Barton would be cleared if it was found the scoundrel conceived the idea of first getting possession of it and allowing Barton to die. This would dispose of him as a rival. So he at once sent Orsino up into this wild place to recover that bit of parchment."

"Ah!" said Frank, slowly, "then you really believe that they have it?"

"I do!"

"But—how can we get possession of it?"

Mr. Vance set his lips tightly, and his eyes shone resolutely.

"It must be recovered if force is used!" he declared, rigidly.

"Wait awhile," said Frank, evidently with sudden inspiration. "Leave matters in my hands, Mr. Vance. I will have that confession if they have got it!"

"May Heaven aid you," was the fervent prayer of Vance.

Then Frank hurried into the pilot-house. The Sky Scrapper was on its swift course back to the Kaymuck village.

First of all, Frank desired to settle the question of Vaneyke's fate. Then he would turn his attention to Dane and Orsino.

Back went the air-ship. Over the Esquimaux town it passed.

Then suddenly a great cry went up from those on the deck. Far below upon an ice-field a man was seen running at full speed.

He was gesticulating wildly, and it needed but a glance to recognize Vaneyke.

The joy of all, when the doctor was seen to be safe and sound, cannot be expressed in words.

The air-ship at once descended, and in a few moments the doctor was taken aboard.

He had spent a rather uncomfortable night in the storm, but was kept from freezing by burrowing in the snow and making for himself a temporary snow house like that of the Esquimaux.

His heavy fur suit had protected him well. When the storm subsided he once more sallied forth and this time was able to locate the Kaymuck village.

The doctor was warmly welcomed and hastily recounted his experiences, though he said nothing of his motive in starting back to the Kaymuck village to find Frank after his overhearing of the conversation of the two villains, Orsino and Dane.

But after having partaken of refreshment and recovered himself, the doctor managed to say in an undertone to Frank:

"I want to see you upon a very important matter."

The young inventor was just a little surprised, but he only said:

"All right! Come down into my state-room in half an hour."

At that time Vaneyke was on hand.

The scientist succinctly related his experience. Frank listened with the deepest of interest and surprise.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "My suspicions are verified. Those villains have the confession. They must give it up!"

The young inventor arose and flung open the door. He started for the deck and the scientist followed him.

It was his intention to at once confront Dane and demand the parchment.

The Sky Scrapper was yet resting upon the ice plain, where Vaneyke had been taken aboard.

A flock of wild swans occupied a basin of water just around the angle of a berg near, and Barney and Pomp and Jack Mains had taken their rifles and gone out to try and secure several.

Mr. Vance and Sybil had accompanied them. This left Dane and Orsino upon the deck where they were conversing in a low, excited manner, when Frank Reade, Jr., came out of the cabin with Vaneyke.

"Now is our golden opportunity," Dane was saying. "We have only to knock over Reade and that old scientist and then we have the air-ship in our possession!"

"But the girl," said Orsino.

"It is unlucky that she is not on board. But you see we shall not have another such a chance. We must fix it to get hold of her later."

Thus the precious pair of rogues had planned when Frank Reade marched straight up to them.

The young inventor's face wore a determined expression, and his eyes snapped as he said vigorously:

"Gentlemen, I want that roll of fox skin parchment which you stole from the cairn. Which one of you has it?"

A bomb dropped at the feet of the villains could not have given them a greater shock.

For a moment neither could speak. Dane was the first to recover. He tried to fain indifference.

"I don't understand you," he said, superciliously. "What do you mean?"

"You'll find out very quickly," said Frank, resolutely, "if you don't deliver up that confession. I want it."

CHAPTER XII.

ALL SCHEMES FAIL.

"You will have to prove first that we have got it," said Dane, who was arguing to gain time, and made a side motion to Orsino.

The latter began to work around in Frank's rear.

"I have plenty of proof," said Frank.

"You have?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Here is a gentleman who overheard the whole of your rascally plotting. Come now, the game is up. I give you this chance. Deliver up the confession and I will land you in Stockholm with the others. If you do not I shall take it from you by force, and leave you here to a pleasant fate with the Eskimos."

Dane laughed scornfully.

"You talk confidently," he said. "It will not be easy for you to take that from me by force."

Frank turned to call Barney and Pomp. He was very angry, and determined to carry out his threat.

But even as he turned, Orsino with an animal like yell sprang forward.

He dealt Frank a terrific blow just back of the ear. The young inventor dropped as if shot.

Dr. Vaneyke came to Frank's assistance. But Dane dealt him a fearful blow which sent the old man in a half senseless heap over the rail and into a snow-bank.

Frank had fallen like one dead. Only for a moment the two villains hesitated.

Orsino had whisked out a knife.

"Shall I kill him?" he hissed.

"No, you'll only spill blood everywhere," said Dane, hurriedly. "Toss him overboard. I guess you've broken his neck anyway."

Quickly both laid hands on the young inventor.

They threw his body out into the snow. Then both started for the pilot-house. The air-ship was at their mercy.

Dane rushed into the pilot-house and seized a lever.

But he did not understand what combination to set it upon to make the Sky Scrapper ascend.

Only Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp knew this.

It was a wise precaution of the young inventor's in having set the lever upon a combination. This prevented any one raising the air-ship without that knowledge.

Dane reversed the lever, but there was a buzzing and whirring, and the air-ship did not move.

"Confound it all!" yelled the villain. "What ails it?"

"Perhaps you haven't got the right lever," suggested Orsino.

"I'll swear to it!"

Now Dane had watched Frank manipulate the lever, and he knew that this was the one. But he did not know how to operate it. This was why the air-ship would not rise. The villain was discomfited.

"Something is wrong!" he fumed.

"Be lively!" cried Orsino. "That old covey is giving the alarm!"

This was true.

Dr. Vaneyke had recovered, and was shouting to the hunting party. There was no time to lose.

"Confound the thing!" roared Dane, with a volley of curses.

Then he fell to trying the other keys and levers. The result was that he placed his hand upon a live wire.

The effect was ludicrous as well as instantaneous. The villain was hurled across the room as if kicked by a mule.

When he picked himself up he was very angry indeed. He seized an iron bar and was about to strike the key board.

"Curse the contrivance!" he yelled. "I'll smash it, if nothing else."

But Orsino restrained him.

"No!" he cried, "that won't do. Come with me!"

"Where?"

"We must pull Reade aboard the craft again."

Dane looked surprised.

"What for?"

"We will compel him to operate the machinery. We can keep him prisoner until he has learned us all and then toss him overboard!"

Dane saw the logic of this, or at least thought he did. He was quick to act.

"All right! Come on!"

Out of pilot-house, both sprang. But in that instant they saw that the game was up.

Frank had regained his senses and was scrambling to his feet. Dr. Vaneyke was signaling to the hunting party who was now quite near the air-ship.

Against such odds the two villains could hope to do nothing.

They saw this at a glance.

"The game is up!" cried Dane. "We've got to shirk for ourselves, Rafael. What shall we do?"

The two villains looked at each other.

Then Orsino cried:

"To the Kaymuck village. We can get Kaylo on our side. He and his men will stand for us!"

"Do you believe it?"

"I know it!"

Over the rail of the Sky Scraper the villains sprang. Quickly they ran across the ice plain and disappeared among the bergs.

At this moment the hunting party came up.

Explanations were quickly in order. The astonishment of all was great when Frank told them the truth about the villains.

It was necessary to recapture them and gain the confession of Rhines. Plans were quickly made.

Frank was not seriously injured and had now quite recovered. He went into the pilot-house at once.

The villains, however, had so deranged the machinery, that it required some little time to get it in working order again. But the start was finally made.

In the meantime the two villains had reached the Esquimaux village.

The Kaymucks were quickly aroused.

Orsino had no trouble in getting Kaylo upon his side. Preparations were made for resistance if the Sky Scraper should attack them.

This had hardly been accomplished when the air-ship was seen bearing down upon the spot.

The Sky Scraper was several hundred feet in the air, and hung over the Esquimaux village for some while.

Then slowly it descended.

Frank Reade, Jr., was at the rail, and at sight of him the Esquimaux raised a terrible outcry and sent up a shower of javelins.

None of these reached the air-ship, but Frank saw at once that the intentions of the natives were hostile.

"The villains have stirred them up!" he cried. "Ah, they deserve to be hung!"

"That they do!" declared Otis Vance; "but first let us recover the confession."

"Begorra I'd jist loike to thry a bead an ther spalpeens!" cried Barney.

"No," interposed Frank, "that will never do. Don't shoot until I give orders."

And the command was obeyed.

Nothing was to be seen of Dane and Orsino. They were probably secreted in the ice fortress of the Kaymucks.

Frank attempted to open a parley with the Esquimaux. But they greeted the attempt with yells of derision.

This angered the young inventor.

"I'll soon bring them to terms," he declared, resolutely.

Electric wires were dragged over the air-ship's rail. Then Frank produced a small electric bomb of his own manufacture.

This he dropped upon the rampart of the Kaymucks' ice fortress.

The effect was thrilling.

It tumbled to pieces in a jiffy with the explosion, and the natives there concealed tumbled out into daylight an astonished crowd.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., saw a sledge with a score of dogs attached leave the village at full speed to the southward. Upon this sledge were the villains Dane and Orsino. Pursuit was at once given by the Sky Scraper.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT REYKJAVIK.

It was certainly a piece of folly in the two villains to hope to escape in that manner.

Of course the Sky Scraper could easily overtake the dog team.

It sailed along some ways above the sledge. When the Esquimaux village was several miles behind Frank Reade proceeded to act.

He drew the electric wire, trailing from the Sky Scraper's deck, across the pack of dogs.

In a moment they were piled up in an unconscious heap.

Awful curses broke from Dane.

"The jig is up, Rafael!" he yelled. "We'd better surrender!"

But at that moment the wire struck them. In a moment they were senseless.

Down settled the Sky Scraper.

The senseless villains were taken aboard. The confession of Rhines was found in an inner pocket of Dane's coat. When the arch villain came to he found himself a prisoner.

The rejoicing of all on board the Sky Scraper was gall and warmwood to the villain whose schemes were now set at naught.

Mr. Vance faced him with great sternness, and said:

"Dane, you are a bigger rascal than I took you for. I had no idea that you would attempt anything so infamous."

"I played for a big haul and lost!" growled Dane, "that's all there is to it. I have lost and I am satisfied."

"But only think of it!" continued Mr. Vance, "the destruction of Rhines' confession meant the hanging of an innocent man!"

Dane parted his lips until his teeth shone like white pearls, and retorted:

"I don't care. He won the girl I loved away from me. Curse him! I hate him!"

Mr. Vance turned away, saying to Frank:

"He is incorrigible. Really, I think he is the worst wretch I ever knew."

But Dane called out:

"I say, Vance!"

"Well?" said that gentleman, turning.

"What are you going to do with us?"

Mr. Vance looked at Frank Reade, Jr. Indeed this very question had been absorbing the young inventor's mind.

"Upon my word, I hardly know!" he said. "If I were to exercise just prerogative, I would deliver you up to the law."

"You'll have to carry me quite a ways to do that," said Dane.

This was true.

Frank was thoughtful for a moment.

Then Dane continued:

"I'll make a compromise with ye. Put us off here, give us our liberty and weapons, and we will never trouble you again."

Frank exchanged glances with Vance.

"Why, you will have hard lines," he said. "It may be years before you will get back into civilization."

"I don't care if I never see it again!" said

Dane desperately. "I have lost my big game, and I don't care what becomes of me."

Frank was thoughtful a moment.

He discussed the affair a few moments with Mr. Vance.

"I have no doubt they will fraternize with the Esquimaux," he said. "We will be well rid of them."

So it was decided to accept the offer of Dane.

Provisions, ammunition and guns were given them, and they were given their liberty.

Then Frank Reade shouted:

"All aboard! Now we leave the Arctic!"

The Sky Scraper shot up into the air.

The abandoned villains waved their arms, and as the Sky Scraper shot forward were soon lost to view.

Frank set a straight course for Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland.

Mr. Vance declared that he would just as soon be left there as anywhere, if he could chance to hit a home-bound steamer, and this might be the case. If not, then Frank would then take them to some important port on the coast of Norway.

The flight across Davis Strait and the southern part of Greenland was without any remarkable incident.

Indeed, heavy mists lay below the air-ship while over the water, and when over Greenland for a long space they drove through heavy snow storms.

But at length they emerged from mists and storms and the waters of the North Atlantic smiled beneath them.

In due course land was observed to the eastward. Frank announced that it was the coast of Iceland, and all crowded to the rail to get a view of the famous island.

They beheld a rough and barren coast with patches of vivid green verdure here and there among the rocks.

Stunted forests and desolate plains and mighty mountain chains rising seemingly into the clouds were the chief features.

Reykjavik was a rough collection of huts and rude dwellings of stone. In the small harbor, however, there were quite a number of vessels.

And among them was seen a steamer which flew the American flag. It was a welcome sight to all.

"If I can get passage aboard of her," said Mr. Vance, "it shall be my duty to go at once back to America and relieve poor Barton. I shall give up my European trip."

The appearance of the Sky Scraper over the harbor of Reykjavik had apparently created a sensation.

The decks and rigging of all the ships were instantly crowded, and the American steamer in particular.

Frank Reade, Jr., allowed the Sky Scraper to descend until within a few hundred feet of the steamer's maintop. Then he stepped to the rail and waved the American flag.

A cheer went up from the steamer's crew. Then a brass cannon forward spoke a hearty salute.

Frank stepped to the breech of the electric gun. He inverted the muzzle and pressed an electric key.

A projectile shot down into the waters of the harbor. There was a deafening roar, and a column of water rose to the height of a hundred feet, making a beautiful display.

In that moment the young inventor showed the advantage he possessed over anything that floated upon water. The novel salute impressed all aboard the ships.

Others of other nationalities answered the salute. Then Frank allowed the Sky Scraper to descend until he was within hailing distance of the steamer.

Then he suffered the huge wings to hold the air-ship here in suspension, while he stepped to the rail and saw a sea of startled faces below him.

The officers of the steamer stood upon the bridge, and the captain, placing a speaking trumpet to his lips, shouted:

"Ahoy up there! What sort of a craft do you call that?"

"This is the Sky Scraper, ship of the air," replied Frank Reade, Jr., promptly. "What craft are you?"

"The Orient, of the U. S. North Atlantic whaling squadron," replied the captain. "I am Hiram Beals, captain, and hail from Boston."

"Good!" cried Frank. "Will you take passengers for Boston?"

"Of course," was the hearty reply.

"When do you sail?"

"In thirty hours."

Frank threw a ladder over the rail. Down this he went and stood upon the steamer's deck. He shook hands with Captain Beals and was heartily welcomed.

Succinctly Frank told his story and explained the character and mechanism of the Sky Scrapper.

The crew of the Orient listened with great wonder. Captain Beals scratched his head perplexedly and said:

"Well, I'll be keelhaunched! I never reckoned upon seeing ships sailing in the air. But the world is gittin' powerful smart, and it's just such wonderful chaps as you are doing it too!"

Then the passengers aboard the Sky Scrapper, Mr. Vance, Sybil and Jack Mains, descended to the Orient's deck and were booked as passengers.

Mr. Vance gripped Frank's hand heartily, and said:

"Mr. Reade, I shall never forget my journey with you upon the Sky Scrapper. I shall hope to see you upon your completion of your journey around the world."

Sybil looked unutterable gratitude as she said in a choking voice:

"But for you my life would have been wrecked. Accept my undying gratitude!"

Jack Mains pulled his foretop.

"Hang me high," he exclaimed in his sailor fashion, "I'll never forget ye, skipper, and may ye have luck on yer voyage. God bless ye, sir, is all the pay a poor sailor can give ye!" Then he waved his hand to Barney and Pomp on the Sky Scrapper's deck above. "I'll see ye in port, mates, an' may luck go wid ye!"

"Begorra, the same to ye!" cried Barney.

"Yo' hab mah bes' respects!" said Pomp.

Then Frank turned to Mr. Vance in farewell, and said:

"I hope yo' will get home in time to save young Barton."

"He will," declared Captain Beals. "The first port we make is St. Johns, Newfoundland, and a telegram can be sent from there."

Of course, as Frank Reade, Barney and Pomp were to continue their journey around the world they could not learn at once the result of the reprieve. But in taking leave of the Vances suffice it to say right here, that the reprieve did arrive in time, and young Barton was cleared and saved from the gallows.

It would be well to say also that a year later loving and true Sybil Vance became his happy bride. Neither Dane nor Orsino troubled them afterward for they did not return from the Arctic regions alive, losing their lives in a crevasse a short time after having again fraternized with the Kaymucks.

CHAPTER XIV.

BARNEY AND POMP EXCHANGE IDEAS.

Thus terminated happily the first chapter in the series of remarkable accomplishments by the crew of the Sky Scrapper. New and more thrilling incidents were in store.

Frank did not at once leave Iceland.

Dr. Vaneyke was anxious to spend some little time in research upon this wonderful little island, with its barren characteristics upon which it seems almost incredible that human life should be supported.

"Yet," said the scientist enthusiastically, "here lived and ruled the famous Snarro Sturleson the chief of Norwegian poets and historians. Here was written the famous Heims-kringla or World Circle consisting of an account of all the Norwegian kings from mythic times down to A. D. 1150. Famous old Sagaman was Sturleson. Here at Reykjavik in the year 1477 there arrived a Genoese barque captained by a long visaged, gray-haired mariner from Genoa, who took an amazing interest in hunting up traditions and evidence of the existence of a mighty unexplored continent to the southwest visited in tradition and no doubt in very fact by Eric the Red."

"This same Genoese captain was no other than Columbus, and it was no doubt from the Icelandic tradition that he obtained the theory of the existence of a new world."

"A very interesting fact!" said Frank Reade, Jr., "and one which I daresay is not commonly known."

"Yet it is a fact!" declared Dr. Vaneyke, positively. "I would like also to visit the geysers and the famous Plain of Thingvalla!"

"You shall have your desire!" said Frank.

So the air-ship made a landing in Reykjavik with the kindly permission of the governor. The simple natives of the island showed all evidences of their inherent and reputed hospitality.

The Sky Scrapper was an object of intense wonderment to them.

Indeed, the ships of other nationalities in the harbor sent ashore large quotas each day to view the wonderful air-ship.

This kept Barney and Pomp busy, and also tickled their vanity greatly, for nothing delighted them more than an opportunity to expatiate upon the virtues and wonders of the famous invention.

Dr. Vaneyke found gratification of his plans in conferring with the dignitaries of the town. He viewed many ancient relics, gathered interesting facts to be incorporated in his book, which he intended writing upon his return home.

Then it was decided to proceed at once to Thingvalla.

Accordingly the Sky Scrapper spread its wings and left Reykjavik, amid the cheers of the populace.

The mighty volcanic plain of Thingvalla was distant but thirty-five miles, so it was but a short while before it burst into view.

The name is derived from the ancient terms: Thing, to speak, and valla, a place. Here in the heart of a mighty volcanic region, many miles in extent, were great sinks, sheer walls descending into them, and fissures rent in basaltic rock, which looked as if hewn out by the hands of ancient Titans.

The action of the volcanic period had created a vast natural amphitheater with a forum, and in this place the ancient Parliaments of the Icelandic peoples were held, as well as councils of war.

Many and varied were the traditions connected with this council chamber of Nature's handiwork. Far to the northward were the slopes of mighty Mount Hecla, with its perpetual columns of fire and smoke.

After leaving the plain of Thingvalla, or the "place of speech," the air-ship went on to the Geysers. These were viewed briefly, and then Dr. Vaneyke said:

"All right, Frank! I am ready now to continue the journey around the world."

Up into the air shot the Sky Scrapper.

Frank quickly got his bearings, and set his course. This was directly across Greenland once more, and in a straight line for the North Pole.

Such rapid progress was made that before long they were over Scoresby's Land, or Northeast Greenland.

While at Reykjavik the aerial voyagers had been comfortable in ordinary clothing, but now they were obliged to don their heavy furs once more.

The cold grew intense as the Sky Scrapper sped over the frozen wilds of the Northern Continent.

There was little of interest in the flight across Greenland.

It was an unvarying monotony of ice and snow, and all were glad finally to see the waters of Baffin's Bay burst into view.

Here Frank shaped his course more to the northward.

It had been decided not to attempt any exploration of the Polar regions, this having been accomplished on a former trip.

"We must get over the Arctic Circle and down into Siberia before another week," declared Frank.

So the Sky Scrapper was put to full speed. As the Pole was approached the cold became intense.

Barney and Pomp, however, managed to have a good time. The two jokers were up to their old tricks, and brimful of mischief.

Barney loved to gull the ducky with monstrous stories of the "ould sod," and generally he found a credulous listener. As it happened Pomp had never been in Ireland, so he never disputed the Celt's word, but simply listened with mouth agape and reverent wonder.

"Bejabers, yez kin talk about huntin' white bears in the Arctic or der tiger in India," said Barney, solemnly, "but I tell yez, naygur, it ain't a fig to der huntin' we has in ould Oireland. Have yez iver heerd av ther larfin' mollygobblers?"

"Kain't say as I eber did," replied Pomp, with honest, wide open eyes.

"Whurrool! Half av yez loife is wasted! Talk about yez gorilla an' yez megotheridums! I tell ye yez should see the Oirish Mollygobblers. An' faith, I'll tell yez a story about that same."

Pomp looked acquiescent and interested, so Barney confidently went on.

"Now yez must know that Oireland, the land av me nativity, is the foineest country on

the airth, Ameriky not ixcepted. Shure, av there's anything yez hear of in any part av the airth, if yez will go to Oireland yez will foind it twice as large."

"Dat am berry funny," asseverated Pomp. "Fer instigation," went on Barney. "Yez hev heerd tell av the Ifell tower. Shure, they've wan in Dublin tin toimes as high, an' yez kin sit up there on a fair day an' see the north an' south poles shtickin' up into the air as big as loife."

"Golly!" gasped Pomp.

"Thin we have great race horses in Oireland. Sure, wan av thim run a moile over ther Limerick coorse in twinty-two seconds, by me own watch. Ivery British son-av-a-gun wint home broke thot day. But moind ye, thar's no girruls in the woorld so pooty as those in Oireland. I saw a pretty flower in a hedge wan day, an' thinkin' I'd loike it, I put me hand upon it an' got a divil av a schlap in ther jaw. Sure, it was a Limerick gal, an' she was loike a ginnivine rose. But to tell yez about the Mollygobblers. It's a very woild an' fierce baste, an' lives up in ther mountains av Tipperary. It's as big as an elephant, an' whin it roars it kin shake a house to pieces. Many a poor divil has the Mollygobbler gobbled up alive."

"Huhl!" exclaimed Pomp; "I don't want no part of sich a country as dat."

"Whisht till I tell yez," said Barney, solemnly. "Wan day me an' Father MacFinn, the village priest, wint out hunting fer foxes. Bejabers, I had great luck! I foired at wan, an' the bullet turned seven ways an' killed nineteen, an' carried thim all home on me back. Shure, there's lots av foxes in Oireland."

"Law sakes!" gasped Pomp. "I should say yo' was right, I sh. But you done tole me nufin' 'bout yo' 'sperience wif de Mollycobbles."

Barney lit his pipe.

"Wud yez give me a bit av toime?" he said, calmly. "Well, afther shootin' the foxes, meself an' ther priest wint on until we seen phwat looked like a deep cave in the hills. Shure, we wudn't turn back, so in we wint. But there wan sich a hot wind cum out av it that we quickly came out agin. Well, whin we got outside, I chanced to look up, an' be me sowl, I seen a couple av big sleepy eyes, an' wud yez believe it, 'twas no cave at all, but the Mollygobbler's mouth we'd walked into."

Pomp's wool rose and his eyes dilated.

"Massy sakes! wha' yo' done den, honey?"

"Begorra, we both cut fer our loives, an' we niver wint huntin' fer ther mollygobbler agin!"

There was a long and painful silence. Pomp looked as if he was undergoing a hard process of mental digestion. Presently he remarked:

"Dat am berry funny, I sh. I se no doubt yo'm tellin' de troof."

"Bejabers, I had a priest wid me!"

"Yah, obco'se! I take yo' wud fo' it. But

dar am some berry large animiles down in de paht ob Georgy I cum from."

"Bejabers, will yez tell av wan?"

"I kin do dat, I sh. I woked fo' a man who kep'a hundred and fifty mules. Well, one morning dis child heerd a great kermotion. I done got up an' looked out ob de windy, and wha' yo' fink I saw? Golly! fo' gracious! dar was a tremejnjis big critter jist scrapin' up de bones ob de last mule!"

There was another pause. Barney astutely puffed at his pipe. Then suddenly removing it from his mouth, he asked:

"Well, phwat was it?"

"Why, jist a common Georgy house fly!" replied Pomp, quietly.

CHAPTER XV.

A HUNT IN THE JUNGLE—A STARTLING SURPRISE.

FOR a moment Barney sat quite still. He did not venture to dispute his friends' word. But after a time he drew a long breath, dumped the contents of his pipe and arising walked solemnly away.

Pomp did the same. The grim humor of their natures forbade any outward exhibition of doubt, but somehow Barney could not help a vague impression that Pomp had made a little the best of it.

The air-ship kept booming along.

Dr. Vaneyke noted the different localities passed over. Kane Basin was one, and then came Grant Land, and the scene of so many hardships experienced by exploring parties in the past.

At 83 deg. 24 min. north latitude the spot reached by Lockwood and Brainard was passed over, and then came the open Polar Sea.

It required some while to cross this and make a southern course. Then gradually the Arctic Circle of the Eastern Hemisphere began to draw nearer.

The Island of Nova Zembla was sighted, and then the white peaks of the Byronga Mountains.

Frank now followed the coast to the delta of the river Lena. Evidences of human life now became plentiful.

Primitive towns were noted and outlandish people were seen. It its height it could not be seen what effect the appearance of the Sky Scrapper had upon the people.

Until the city of Yokontsk was reached Frank held a southeast course. Then he veered to the southwest.

Hundreds of miles of barren territory were covered.

The scenes witnessed would fill volumes, but no incidents worthy of note occurred until one day, after days of swift sailing, the Sky Scrapper crossed the sandy Desert of Shamo and sighted the mighty range of the Himalayas.

The air-ship was crossing the Kwanlun Range into Tibet, when Frank decided to make a descent.

Thousands of miles had been covered thus far. All were willing and eager to once more set foot on terra firma.

So, selecting what looked like a favorable spot in a little green valley, Frank allowed the Sky Scrapper to descend.

The air-ship settled down gracefully and rested upon a grassy knoll near a dense jungle. There had been visible no sign of human habitation, and it was fair to assume that the vicinity was free from such.

This was what Frank desired, for he had no desire of falling in with any of the natives, who would be likely to be hostile.

The natives of this section were a cross between the Mongolian, the Hindoo, and the Mohammedan, and an ignorant, war-like class. Intercourse with them would not be at all pleasant.

Our voyagers being now in a semi-tropical clime, had long since laid aside their furs, and were now dressed in white duck suits and cool shade hats of cork.

All leaped out upon the green turf with exhilaration. Barney's restless spirit however cropped out.

"Begorra, it's a hunt I must have!" he cried. "Shure, naygur, are yez wid me?"

"If Marse Frank am willin'," said Pomp.

"Go ahead!" cried Frank, "but don't get into trouble."

"Don't yez worry about that!" cried Barney. "Wait till yez see the foine rabbit I'll bring back."

"You may get bigger game," said Dr. Vaneyke. "I have no doubt there are tigers in the bush, and as for human foes, perhaps you have not heard of the Thibetan giants. Somewhere in these parts there is a nation of them, and they are a savage crew indeed."

However, Barney and Pomp were not to be deterred by any such report as this. They took their rifles and soon disappeared in the forest.

Frank and the doctor were left on board the Sky Scrapper.

They sat under the awning on deck for some while engaged in smoking. Then Frank threw away his cigar and said:

"Upon my word, doctor, I wish I had gone hunting with the boys. I feel just like a bit of exercise."

"It is not too late to overtake them!" declared the scientist. "Go ahead and I will stay aboard the air-ship."

"I don't think there is any danger of an attack from the natives."

"Of course not," said the doctor. "I feel like taking a nap and I'll turn in. Go ahead."

So the matter was settled. Dr. Vaneyke went below to take a nap and Frank with his elephant rifle started to find Barney and Pomp.

The young inventor strode away through the jungle at a lively gait.

He could only guess at the direction taken by the two hunters, but he was guided finally by the distant crack of a rifle.

"There they are," he muttered, "they have bagged something already!"

At that moment there was a rustling in the copse near. Then a beautiful specimen of the jungle deer leaped out.

The creature hesitated one fatal moment. It allowed Frank to get his rifle to his shoulder and fire.

The deer leaped in the air and fell dead. This was good game, and Frank pulled the

carcass into the path and heaped some brush over it.

Then he pushed on in quest of Barney and Pomp. He heard their rifles again and soon signaled them.

When he came up, they had a deer and half a score of fine pheasants. Truly, it was a sportsman's paradise.

"Begorra!" cried Barney, enthusiastically, "I niver found foiner shootin' in all me loife. Shure it's to the queen's taste!"

"Golly! I jes' lak fo' to try mah luck on another deer," said Pomp.

"Go an, yez black ape!" cried Barney. "Ye niver killed that deer in all yer loife!"

"Don't yo' be so suah, chile! I done fink mah bullet had jes' as much right to kill it as yo's hab!"

The situation was explained to Frank, and he was asked to referee the dispute. This was how it happened.

The deer had leaped into the open, and the two hunters had fired at the same moment. Both bullets hit the mark, but one passed through the back and another through the heart.

As the backbone was disintegrated, it was certain that either ball would have proved fatal. But each claimed the shot which cleft the deer's heart.

"What a foolish thing to quarrel about," said Frank, impatiently. "Either bullet was sufficient to kill. You must divide the honor, which belongs to one as much as the other."

And so it was settled, though both hunters grumbled not a little on the return to the air-ship.

The jungle seemed to be full of game. Another wood deer was shot, and some grouse. Then the deer shot by Frank was found.

They had been absent from the air-ship about two hours.

The hunt had been a glowing success, and all were in high feather. But as they traveled on through the jungle, Barney, who was in advance, suddenly dropped his load and gasped:

"Mither av Mercy! Phwat do yez call that? I niver seen the loikes av that foot afore!"

In the soft soil of the jungle path there were many footprints. They came from a traversing path and were monstrous in size. Frank gave a sharp cry of comprehension.

"No doubt they are Thibetan giants!" he cried, "they are going in the direction of the air-ship. If they find it the consequences may be serious. Forward, lively!"

The three hunters dropped their loads of game in the path and rushed forward. A moment later they burst out of the jungle. An astounding and terrifying sight was revealed to them.

The clearing held fully a score of natives the like of which they had never seen before. They were of a Mongolian type, barbarously clad and literal giants in stature. The shortest could not have been less than seven feet high.

But what filled the three white men with horror was the spectacle of half a score of the giants who had lifted the Sky Scrapper bodily upon their shoulders and were carrying it away as if it were a toy.

A more astounding state of affairs could hardly be imagined.

CHAPTER XVI.

OVER THE HIMALAYAS.

THE Thibetan giants had lifted the Sky Scrapper as if it were a stick of timber, and were actually carrying it bodily away. Frank, Barney and Pomp, in the verge of the jungle, gazed upon the spectacle literally dumfounded.

It was some time before Frank could recover himself.

He knew that Vaneyke was on board, and probably asleep in the cabin. Why did he not awake?

What was to be done? A thousand plans chased each other through Frank's brain.

The Thibetans were savage looking brutes, and no doubt, at the slightest provocation, could rend the air-ship into fragments. It was an awful critical moment.

"Bejabers, I'll foire at ther thieves!" said Barney, half raising his gun.

"Pick yo' man, I'ish!" rejoined Pomp.

But Frank put up his hand.

"No," he said. "Wait a moment. That would not do."

Then a plan occurred to him.

He saw that if Vaneyke could only be aroused he might set the wings in motion, and by ascending save the air-ship. But how was he to awaken the scientist?

Frank studied the situation several moments. But his courage did not fail him and his inventive faculties now stood him in good stead.

Through the pilot-house window he could see the electric gong. He raised his rifle and drew careful aim! If he could strike it he could set the alarm going.

This would be sure to awaken Vaneyke. Even as he drew aim Barney saw his purpose and cried:

"Shure, sor, that will do if yez kin hit it."

"I can try," said Frank with lips tightly set as he drew aim.

One moment his keen eye glanced along the barrel. Then the rifle spoke.

The next moment the electric gong was going for all it was worth.

The giants seemed astounded and came to a halt. They seemed inclined to set the air-ship down for an investigation, but something occurred at that moment to prevent.

"Hoorah!" cried Barney. "Shure there's the docthor himself!"

Dr. Vaneyke had been aroused, and now rushed out of the cabin. He was a trifle dazed, but seemed to take in the situation readily.

He made a quick dive into the pilot-house. His hand pressed the motive lever, and the result was astonishing to the Thibetans.

Like a bird of the air, the Sky Scrapper leaped aloft out of their clutches. Up it went like a rocket for a thousand feet.

And it might have continued going had not Dr. Vaneyke shut off speed and held it in suspense.

Two of the giants had clung to the rail and had gone up to a dizzy height before relaxing their grip. When they did let go, they were dashed to the ground and to death.

The Thibetans stood, gazing upward for some while, like those stupefied. Some of them, evidently imbued with superstition, fell upon their faces abjectly.

Others were angry, and shook their battle clubs and danced about madly. And now our friends in the jungle suddenly found themselves imperiled.

Barney, in an indiscreet moment, had exposed himself. The giants saw him, and the sight created a sensation among them.

One moment they stood in evident surprise. Then they came after the fugitives with loping strides and savage yells.

Frank Reade knew that flight was the only course. For them to stand their ground in face of such numbers would be folly.

So the young inventor shouted:

"Into the jungle, boys! We must give them the slip."

Barney and Pomp needed no second bidding. They did not hesitate to obey their employer. Frank led the way.

The chase through the jungle was an exciting one.

The giants were close behind and seemed to be spreading their lines with the evident purpose of surrounding the fugitives. Frank foresaw this.

The young inventor kept glancing upwards and was satisfied that they were seen by Dr. Vaneyke.

The air-ship was rapidly descending and drawing nearer. Suddenly Frank shouted:

"Hold on, Barney and Pomp. Wait here!"

His admonition was a timely one. His trained ear had heard the snap of the breach of the electric gun aboard the Sky Scrapper.

He knew that Vaneyke meant to use the deadly weapon.

There was a moment of suspense. The fugitives looking upward saw the needle-like muzzle of the gun thrust downward.

Then there was a lightning flash and a terrific thunderous roar in the jungle. The ground trembled and the dry grasses igniting, flames leaped into the air.

Dr. Vaneyke was seen at the rail making gestures to the fugitives to run back to the clearing. The shot from the gun had probably cleared the way.

They were not long in following this instruction. Back they went, leaving a wall of flame to the right as the fire spread.

The giants were upon the other side of this. In a few moments the fugitives were once more in the clearing.

The Sky Scrapper was just over their heads. Down it settled and once more rested upon the ground.

Frank and Barney and Pomp quickly went aboard. Up sprung the air-ship and the thrilling scene below was revealed.

The giants were fleeing before the flames

with all speed. The fire was every moment becoming more extensive.

"Begorra, I thought the Sky Scrapper was lost that toime!" cried Barney. "Shure I niver thought we'd git it back agin!"

"It's a wonder the savages did not attempt to destroy it at once!" said Frank. "Fortunately for us they did not!"

"It was foolish of me to fall asleep!" declared Dr. Vaneyke. "We can't leave the air-ship unguarded even in the desolate depth of the Sahara!"

"That's so!" agreed Frank, "we will find foes of some kind to pounce upon it."

"Golly, but dis chlle am glad fo' to gib dem big giants de shake!" cried Pomp, cutting a double shuffle.

There was no desire to remain in the vicinity longer, so a straght line was made for the Himalayas.

All that night the Sky Scrapper sped on over a diversified tract of country. With the coming of dawn the mighty Himalayas loomed up near at hand.

The scenery now became something grand beyond description.

Mighty heights, jagged peaks and deep valleys occupied the scope of view. Snow lay upon certain of the peaks, while in the valleys far below was tropical foliage and intense heat.

The Sky Scrapper gradually rose above the lesser peaks, until the topmost height was reached. The air here was so cold and rare that overcoats were needed, and one's lungs were sorely tried.

An hour later, the great range was crossed.

All the vast territory of Southern India now lay to the southward. The land of magic and of mystery, of thugs and dervishes, of cunning arts and fiendish crimes.

Our voyagers looked forward with not a little of interest to the flight over this wonderful region.

"Begorra, I've a great desire to see some av the wonderful temples I have heard of!" said Barney. "I ixpect they're very foine."

"You are right, Barney," agreed Frank. "There are few nations can boast of finer styles of architecture or who are ahead of the Hindoos in certain fine arts."

"I hope to add much to my research among these people," said Dr. Vaneyke. "It is a field which can never be overworked."

"I suppose Pomp will hail Africa with delight," cried Frank.

"Golly, Marse Frank, am yo' gwine dat way?" asked Pomp.

"I am going along the west coast of the continent."

"Bejabers, yez'll have a chance fer ter luk up some av yer cousins an' uncles, naygur," said Barney, mischievously.

"Huh!" grunted Pomp. "I done flink yo' fin' yo' ancestors among de gorillas dar."

Barney flushed, and the two jokers would no doubt have indulged in a bit of a tussle then and there, had it not been for Frank, who frowned it down.

The air-ship made good time down the slopes of the Himalayas.

Gradually the mountain district began to recede, and now came signs of towns and even small cities.

These were primitive enough, and in most cases consisted of cane bungalows or thatched roof huts.

As the Sky Scrapper was sailing over one of them, the voyagers beheld a most terrible sight.

In the central square of the town six naked men were bound to stakes, and it was evident that an execution in the Hindoo style was in order.

Among them Frank fancied that he recognized a white man. This decided the young inventor in a course of action.

CHAPTER XVII.

LIEUT. HOLCOMBE'S STORY.

DR. VANEYKE stood by Frank's side and also witnessed the scene.

"My soul!" he gasped. "Do you see what they are going to do, Frank?"

"An execution!"

"How horrible!"

"It is probable to satisfy some silly religious rite. I believe one of them is a white man."

"He is, as sure as fate."

This was enough for Frank.

He was determined to save the fellow's life. At once the Sky Scrapper began to descend.

By this time the Hindoo populace had caught sight of the air-ship. The effect was most startling.

Consternation seemed to seize them, and they appeared to be the victims of superstitious terror.

Many fled into the huts and even into the jungle. Others fell upon their faces, and some stood stupefied watching the mysterious apparition in the sky.

By the prisoners stood a tall, powerful Hindoo, with a peculiar sharp crease in his hand.

He was the executioner, and the method employed by him was to with one scientific cut disembowel the victim.

In another moment the horrible deed would have been executed had it not been for the appearance of the air-ship.

The Sky Scrapper swooped down like a mighty bird of prey and touched the ground in the center of the square and not ten feet from the prisoners.

These were amazed beyond expression, and the white man seemed fearfully excited.

He was a tall, finely proportioned fellow and evidently an Englishman. The other prisoners seemed as overcome with superstitious terror as the villagers had.

But Frank Reade, Jr., did not wait for the Hindoos to recover.

He shouted to Barney and Pomp:

"Over with you and cut their bonds!"

Barney and Pomp went over the rail with this. Quick as a flash they cut the bonds of the prisoners.

The released Hindoos hardly knew how to act. Some of them rushed into the jungle and others fell upon their faces.

But the white man with a loud shout of thanksgiving, rushed to the rail of the air-ship.

"Heaven be praised!" he cried. "You are countrymen of mine I know, though you do fly in the air."

"We are of your color anyway!" cried Frank, heartily. "I am Frank Reade, Jr., of Readestown, U. S. A."

"An American!" cried the released prisoner. "Well, I should have known that. No one else would be traveling around with such a wonderful invention as this. I am Sydney Holcombe, lieutenant of H. M. Royal Guards of Calcutta."

"I am glad to meet you, Lieut. Holcombe!" said Frank, warmly.

"I cannot express my pleasure!" said the lieutenant, "or my wonderment. Two minutes more and I would have been disemboweled."

"Ugh! we will not think of that!" said Frank, "but pray, tell me how you came to be a prisoner here?"

"Certainly! It is quite a long story to go in to details."

"Then wait a while. But inform me what village and branch this is of the Indian Empire?"

"These are Kampoors, and this is the village of Baratik, in the province of Nepaul. They are not a bad lot of Hindoos setting aside their religious prejudices!"

"Ah! then you were chosen as a human sacrifice to their gods?"

"Exactly. I have lived among them for some months, most peacefully. But one of their high priests, for some reason or other, put me on the list of sacrifice. Resistance was of no avail."

"Well," said Frank, forcibly, "we'll soon knock some of that nonsense out of their befogged brains. Suppose you speak to them and restore their confidence?"

"I will," replied the lieutenant.

He understood the Kampoor tongue very well, and addressed the prostrate Hindoos from the deck of the Sky Scrapper.

"Kampoors arise!" he cried. "There is nothing to fear from my white brother who flies in the air."

It required some time, however, to restore the confidence of the ignorant natives. However, they finally gathered about the wonderful flying machine and listened to the words of the lieutenant.

The head man of the village finally ventured to come forward.

He was quite a distinguished and intelligent fellow. He rejoiced in the name of Munyadi Bhar, and smiled in a pleasant manner as he was introduced to Frank Reade, Jr.

Now that the fear and the reserve of the Hindoos was overcome they became quite social. The priest who had ordered the sacrifice was summarily sent for by Rajah Munyadi and condemned to death.

Quite a celebration was held in the square. The Hindoo soldiers paraded, bands played and snake charmers entertained the visitors.

Then nightfall came and the Rajah retired to

his bungalow with his guards. The air-ship was surrounded with a body of Hindoo soldiers.

Dr. Vaneyke was extremely anxious to study the habits and peculiarities of the people, so Frank agreed to stay over the next day in Baratik.

He offered Lieut. Holcombe safe transportation to Lucknow, the nearest military station, which he gladly accepted.

That evening in the cabin of the Sky Scrapper Holcombe told his story to Frank Reade, Jr.

"I was stationed at Lucknow with the company of Ninth Fusileers of H. M. Guards, when news was received of an uprising in the Nepaul country and I was instructed to go thither at once and put it down."

"Our soldiers are at all times considered more than a match for the natives, so I took what I believed to be a sufficient force—two hundred men."

"Sojourning at Lucknow was a famous naturalist and butterfly hunter—Captain Amos Bright of London. Seeing a brilliant chance to safely travel through certain inaccessible jungles, he asked permission to accompany us."

"With him was his daughter, a very beautiful and accomplished young lady—Miss Alice. Also in the party were two botanists of the London Botanical Society."

"All went well until we were deep in the wilds of Nepaul."

"Then we were suddenly attacked by a mighty force of natives. There were legions of them."

"We fought desperately, but my men were cut down like wheat. A fearful massacre took place."

"I was made a prisoner, and for two days marched through the jungle with my savage captors. Then I managed to escape and made my way hither. I made friends with Munyadi, and have remained here since."

"And what of the others?" asked Frank, greatly interested.

"Ah, that I do not know. I have never heard from one of them."

"Then your people at Lucknow evidently believe you and your command swallowed up in the jungle?"

"I suppose so."

"But—it was a fearful fate for the girl!"

Lieut. Holcombe turned pale.

"Ah, it was awful!" he said. "I yet cling to the hope that she is alive. I mean to make an expedition in search of her when I get back to Lucknow."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"I hope you will succeed."

"I have little faith in it. But I have not told you the reasons of the Kampoors for sacrificing all of us prisoners."

"No!"

"There lurks in the jungle near here a pair of terrible man-eating tigers. Every little while they descend upon the town and carry off some luckless native."

"Then the high priests beat their tomtoms and select a number of victims for sacrifice to propitiate the gods that they may keep the tigers away."

"How idiotic!" said Frank. "Why don't they all turn out and hunt them down?"

"Oh, that is Hindoo superstition. So long as idolatry reigns in India, so long will it remain in a darkened state."

"I should say so. I have little patience with such a people."

"But I have an idea that these Kampoors know the tribe which attacked us that luckless day in the jungle. I have no doubt I could learn through Munyadi whether or not there is a white girl held captive by them, provided I could do him some great service."

"And what might that be?"

"I can think of nothing greater than the extirpation of the man eaters."

"Ah, I see."

"Forgive me for proposing a thing to you which may not meet your favor. But with this air-ship you could easily hunt them down."

"A tiger hunt!" exclaimed Frank with delight. "Why, that is a sport for kings. Of course we will try it."

"Do you mean it?" cried Holcombe, joyfully.

"Of course I do. We will try it to-morrow."

"A thousand thanks!" cried the lieutenant, wildly. "Fate is certainly favoring me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TIGER HUNT.

HOLCOMBE could hardly wait for the morning to come.

At an early hour he hurried to the bungalow of the Rajah Munyadi and laid the matter before him.

The Hindoo ruler was overjoyed with the idea. A tiger hunt was sport enough for all. The town was at once aroused.

The people congregated enthusiastically in the square. The rajah came over to the air-ship to see Frank.

Of course Barney and Pomp were carried away with the project.

Anything in the line of such royal sport pleased them mightily. Great preparations were made by everybody.

The rajah at once sent messengers to the walled town of the Mejims to learn if Alice was there imprisoned upon the assurance of Frank Reade, Jr., that the tigers should be extirpated.

As for Holcombe, he was in his element. He could hardly wait for the preparations to be made.

It was arranged that a number of the Kam-poor should go ahead and beat the jungle. If the tigers were there they would sooner or later show themselves.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., would be on hand and destroy them.

At first it had been Frank's intention to seek for the tigers with the Sky Scraper, and fire upon them with the needle gun.

But second thought influenced him not to do this.

When he announced this intention to Holcombe, the latter cried:

"I fear you do not know what you are doing, Mr. Reade. It is no light thing to face a man-eater, and especially with any rifle of ordinary make."

But Frank only smiled.

"Barney," he said, "bring up that black case in my state-room."

It required Pomp's aid to enable Barney to obey this request. But when the long black box lay upon the deck, Frank said:

"Now, lieutenant, I will show you another of my inventions."

Holcombe could say nothing but waited for the case to be opened. Then he was indeed surprised.

Frank lifted from it what looked like a lot of fine steel netting. But quickly he shook it out and showed a jacket of steel.

This he put on. Then he produced a helmet, and also the rest necessary to completely attire him in armor from head to foot.

Holcombe was astounded.

"Armor!" he said, "that is a revival of medieval times."

"Ah, but this is very different armor," said Frank. "Just examine those meshes. No rifle ever made can send a ball through them."

"Wonderful!" cried Holcombe, excitedly. "So you will wear that to hunt the tigers?"

"Why not? They cannot possibly chew me up. Of course I could annihilate them with my electric gun. But there would be no sport in that."

"You are right!" cried Holcombe. "I hope you will succeed."

"I shall."

Frank drew from the case two more suits of armor.

"These are for Barney and Pomp!" he declared, "they will accompany me!"

"Oh, how I wish I could go too!" cried the English lieutenant.

"You can at least be a spectator," said Frank. "You and the Rajah can be guests of Dr. Vaneyke. The doctor can elevate the Sky Scraper over the jungle and you can see the fun!"

"Which is better than nothing!" agreed Holcombe.

"I should say so!"

These plans were conveyed to the Rajah. He was very much pleased to go aboard the air-ship. With eager anticipation he waited for the sport to begin.

For some hours the natives had been busy beating the jungle.

Then word came that the man eaters had been located. They were in the very thickest part and near a rocky eminence.

At once Frank, Barney and Pomp set out thither.

They were attired in suits of mail and carried the explosive shell rifles. Boldly they plunged into the jungle.

For some while they tramped on. The air-ship hovered three hundred feet over their heads.

Holcombe, who was at the rail, suddenly leaned over and shouted:

"Look out! You are very near their den. Go to the right!"

There was a beaten path turning to the right at this point and Frank, knowing that it was a tiger track, turned into it.

They had not far to go.

Suddenly the three hunters came out into the edge of a little clearing at the base of a rocky hill.

A terrified native bush-beater dashed past them, shouting:

"Look out, sahibs! The man-eater!"

Frank pushed forward and beheld a thrilling scene.

There, right at the base of the hill, crouched the striped giant form of a tiger. A roar most thunderous went up.

The young inventor drew a deep breath. He knew that he had been seen.

"Now, Barney," he said, quickly and decisively, "you go to the right and I'll take the center. Pomp, go the left."

The order was quickly obeyed. The man-eater did not seem loth to meet his antagonists.

Rather he seemed to court battle, for he crept forward stealthily, lashing his long tail and roaring loudly.

Frank now saw in his rear the mouth of a deep cavern.

This was probably the tigers' den. How many of the brutes were in those dark depths he had no means of knowing.

He raised his rifle and took careful aim at the tiger. There was a moment of silence and then the gun spoke.

The shell struck the tiger just where it was aimed and exploded with terrific force. But the brute had chanced to make a backward leap, and the explosion caused him to turn a somersault. When he recovered, it was seen that a large strip of hide had been torn from his shoulder.

But the shell had reached no vital part. Frank threw back the lever for another shot.

But the tiger, with a terrible roar, came bounding towards him.

Barney and Pomp both fired.

Barney's shell missed and exploded in the jungle beyond. Pomp's struck the ground under the tiger, but did not stop him.

Frank saw that he was bound to be struck by the tiger.

He fired instantly, and then crouching low, drew a long knife. The shell missed the tiger, but the brute was destined to meet his fate.

The force of his weight thrown against the young inventor crushed him to the earth. The tiger's jaw closed over the arm of Frank Reade, Jr.

But the gleaming teeth could not penetrate the mail. In vain the brute tried to chew his foe up.

But Frank plied the knife with all his might. He used excellent judgment also and endeavored to disembowel the animal.

This was the most vital point he could reach and in a few moments he rolled the dead carcass of the man eater from him and arose unhurt.

The natives gathered about in the jungle yelled their delight, and Barney and Pomp came rushing up.

"Hurrah!" shouted Holcombe from the Sky Scraper's deck. "What will you do, Mr. Reade? The mate of this tiger does not seem to be in sight."

"He is probably in the cave," replied Frank. "The only way is to go in after him."

Ah! but this was very much different from facing the yellow brute in the open. It was an act to test the nerve of the bravest of men—to invade the tiger's den.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TIGER VANQUISHED—RETURN OF THE MESSENGER.

FOR aught Frank Reade knew there might be a dozen tigers in the cavern. Yet he did not flinch.

With Barney and Pomp by his side he started upon the perilous attempt. All was as dark as Erebus in the place.

But he pushed boldly in. Suddenly Pomp paused.

"Golly, Marse Frank, look out fo' yo'sef."

Just ahead in the gloom the three hunters saw two balls of fire. They were the eyes of the second tiger.

Not a sound had the man-eater made, not a move until this moment.

Then a terrible roar deafened those in the cavern. A powerful body shot forward.

There was a terrific explosion as the rifles of all three belloyed at once. Then Frank felt himself hurled to the floor of the cavern.

It seemed as if he was crushed beneath a ton's weight. Then for a few moments he was unconscious.

The force of the blow given by the tiger's paw was the cause of his faintness. But though the tiger's jaws closed for a moment on his shoulder, it was a futile attempt to pierce the meshes of the armor.

Barney and Pomp, in that swift instant, realized the danger of their master.

Without thought of fear or the least hesitation, they rushed to his rescue.

Barney made a blow at the tiger with his hunting knife.

But the huge beast turned from Frank's body and lunged at Barney.

The Celt's knife went to the hilt in his breast, yet the beast did not seem to feel the thrust.

The brute's powerful jaws crashed upon the armor of his foe, but without injuring him in the least.

Again and again Barney used the knife.

Pomp also came forward now, but a blow of the tiger's paw knocked him in a stunned heap.

Only the armor saved the three venturesome tiger hunters from certain death.

In vain the brute tried to overcome Barney. The Irishman was driving the knife deep at every blow.

Blood was gushing in torrents over him. Nothing in the shape of beast could withstand such an attack.

The tiger, with brute instinct, seemed to divine this, and broke away from Barney. It staggered to the mouth of the cavern, and there sank down in a dying state.

Barney picked himself up and stood dripping with blood in the tiger's den. But not a drop of it was his own blood.

Frank and Pomp had both recovered, and now scrambled to their feet. The same realization dawned upon each, and this was that both the man-hunters of the Baratik jungle were done for.

They were not even scratched, and fully recovered from the stunning effects of the blows from the tigers' paws. All three walked coolly out of the cavern.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pomp, "dat was de cleanest knock-out blow I ever got in mah life. I neber fought dat tighah cud strike so hard a blow as dat."

"Bejabers, av ye'd bin undher him all the while as I was, ye moight talk!" cried Barney. "Shure, I thought the bloody baste wud swallow me whole!"

"Huh! I done fink it would distress his stummick jes' a lily bit," said Pomp, with twinkling eyes.

In spite of the serious scrape he had just passed through, the darky could not forego that excellent opportunity to get in a dig at Barney.

The Celt's eyes flashed.

"Bejabers, he'd never smack his lips to swallow ye," he returned. "Shure, he never med the effort."

"Tut, tut!" interrupted Frank. "You should be more polite considering the danger you have just passed through."

But at this moment the air was rent with wild cheering. All the Kampoor natives rushed out of the jungle and made a terrific din in their mad joy at the demise of the dreaded man-eaters.

They were not now afraid to come to the mouth of the cavern. They crowded about the dead tigers and began to hack them to pieces with their spears and knives.

Barney and Pomp and Frank were overwhelmed with the enthusiastic demonstrations of the natives.

The air-ship descended, and Munyadi fairly embraced Frank in his joy.

"Sahib shall have every wish in our power gratified!" he cried. "We are his slaves."

Lieut. Holcombe was profuse in his congratulations.

"Yours was a wonderful exploit!" he cried. "Truly, Mr. Reade, you and your inventions are the marvel of this century."

"I fear that is stretching it," laughed Frank. "Of course we had the advantage of the tigers in the fact that they could not penetrate our armor."

"Still there was risk. I suppose a powerful blow from one of their paws might have broken bones for any one of you?"

"Ah, yes," agreed Frank; "but we escaped that calamity."

"For which we all have reason to be thankful," declared the lieutenant.

Dr. Vaneyke had never had any fears anyway as to the result of the battle. It had been a foregone conclusion with him that the tigers would be wiped out of existence.

The rajah could not restrain the joyful demonstrations of his people.

The conqueror of the dreaded man-eaters was to them a personage more than ordinary. They insisted upon carrying the Sky Scraper upon their shoulders back to the town.

Arrived there our voyagers were given an ovation.

"I tell you these people will always be grateful to you, Mr. Reade," declared Holcombe.

"They will never forget it."

"Indeed!" said Frank, warmly, "I am glad to know that. Certainly, we enjoyed the tiger hunt very much. It is a rare sport."

"I should think it might be in the manner you pursue it. I wish I was the possessor of one of those suits of armor!"

But our friends now were looking forward eagerly to the return of the messenger from the Mejums' city, where Alice and her father, Captain Amos Bright, were supposed to be held prisoners.

Especially was Lieut. Holcombe anxious. That day passed and yet another. Then upon the third morning there was great excitement in the Hindoo town.

The messenger returned and made his report to the Rajah.

The latter sent for Frank and Lieut. Holcombe. They hastened at once to his bungalow, and there Munyadi took them by the hand each, and said:

"I have good news for sahibs. The young girl is alive and safe. But her father was killed!"

Lieut. Holcombe was much excited.

"We must go at once to her rescue!" he cried. "Think you, Rajah, that her captors will do her harm?"

The Rajah shook his head with a smile.

"The teachings of Brahma will not allow that," he said. "Have no fear; you will find her safe, sahib."

Holcombe turned to Frank Reade, Jr., who nodded and said:

"We will start at once."

Munyadi lifted his hand in a friendly gesture and said:

"Will not sahibs permit Munyadi to go with them? His army is at their disposal."

Holcombe looked at Frank. The young inventor was silent for a moment.

He had no doubt of his ability to handle the Mejums single-handed, but yet he reflected the generous offer of Munyadi was not to be so easily overlooked. The aid given by the Hindoo army would be a valuable adjunct.

So, with sudden impulse, he said:

"Rajah, I accept your generous offer with a great deal of pleasure. How soon will your men be ready to start?"

"Before another sunrise, sahib," replied the Kampoor ruler.

This was delay; yet how could it be avoided? Frank and Holcombe exchanged glances.

"How long will it take your men to march to Mejum?" asked Frank.

"Hardly two days!" was the rajah's reply.

Both white men winced. They saw at once how the thing was. People of this clime were not accustomed to the expeditious movement of any live American.

Holcombe looked dismayed, but an idea came to Frank which suggested a way out of the difficulty.

"All right, rajah!" he said, cheerily. "You get your army ready and send them along. Then you come on board the Sky Scraper and we will go on ahead!"

Holcombe looked relieved and the rajah's face beamed.

After all, the Hindoo ruler's prime impulse was to get a ride aboard the Sky Scraper. The matter was settled to the satisfaction of all.

"All right, sahib!" said Munyadi, cheerfully. "I am your servant!"

At once Frank and Holcombe returned to the Sky Scraper. The plan was revealed to the others.

"Come, Pomp!" said Frank, jocularly, "you want to bnsy yourself at once about getting the stateroom ready for our distinguished visi-

tor. It is not often one has the chance of waiting upon a real live king!"

CHAPTER XX.

ON TO MEJUM—THE PARLEY.

"Don' know about dat, sah," said Pomp, with a wry face. "I kain't say I'm stuck on dem air kind ob kings. But I spec he brung his own body servants wif him."

"Oh, no," replied Frank. "I can't carry the whole tribe. Only his majesty himself must go."

"I don' fink dat will wuk," said Pomp, doubtfully. "Howsumdever, I se gwine to fix up de state room, as yo' orders me."

Pomp slid away to execute this mission. The others also went about various preparations.

The night passed without any special incident. With the early morning light all were astir.

Drums were beating and people were scurrying hither and thither in the little Kampoor town.

The king or rajah had given it forth that war was to be made upon the Mejums. This had created excitement.

War is the instinct of savage nature. At once active preparations were in progress.

The Kampoor warriors were marshaled several hundred strong in the main square of the village. Here the rajah reviewed them.

Then marching orders were given them and they started for the city of the Mejums. The Sky Scraper and party were waiting.

The voyagers stood upon the main deck awaiting the coming of the rajah with some impatience. Holcombe was particularly restive.

"Why don't the yellow scoundrel come?" he fumed angrily. "Hasn't he sense enough to know that we are waiting for him? Time is valuable."

"Have patience, Holcombe," laughed Frank Reade, Jr. "It takes kings a good while to move. You ought to know that as you represent monarchical government!"

"But we are ruled by a queen!" declared Holcombe, appreciating the sally. "Nothing slow about Victoria."

"Begorra, there'll be nothin' slow about our king whin your people are koind enough to set out Ireland free!" declared Barney.

"Ireland could not govern itself!" replied Holcombe, coolly. "She cannot get along without England!"

"Bejabers give her a thrial an' see!" exploded Barney. "Divil a chance has she iver had yit!"

"Which is the more fortunate for her!"

"An' the more unfortunate for England!" retorted Barney, "but never moind, the day is coming, an' it ain't far off, beshure! Thin ye'll see Barney O'Shea houlding his lawful skpetre in the hails av his ancestral castle!"

"I would be willing to see Ireland free to see that!" laughed Holcombe, and the others laughed also. "I didn't know you had such an illustrious pedigree, Barney."

"Never moind the pidigree!" said Barney, with a roll of his comical mug. "I kin tell yez the O'Sheas were Oirish kings, an' it's royal blood I ave in me veins this very minuit."

"Lucky man! We are proud to know you!" said Holcombe, ironically, and everybody laughed.

But this somewhat warm and amusing encounter was brought to a sudden and startling close.

"Golly, here comes de king hissef!" cried Pomp.

This was true. Munyadi was approaching the Sky Scraper in a leisurely manner.

He was preceded by about a dozen gaily clad young men, each bearing some particular royal token. Behind followed the small army of servants allotted to a Hindoo king.

The party came up to the Sky Scraper, and a number of them at once climbed aboard. In a twinkling the deck of the Sky Scraper was crowded with them.

Holcombe, who took in the situation, winked at Frank, and then nearly lost himself in convulsions of laughter.

"What did I tell you, Frank?" he said, aside. "What do you think of the cargo?"

For the first time in many years, Frank nearly lost his equanimity. Munyadi came up to him with a flattering smile and embraced him.

"I am ready, sahib," he said, complacently. "But—you—how—which—why, I can't take such a load aboard this air-ship," spluttered Frank. "It is impossible. Really, rajah, I only expected to take you!"

The Hindoo ruler looked aghast.

"Ah, sahib, you do not understand!" he said. "These are my servants, and no Hindoo ruler can travel without them."

Frank looked appealingly at Holcombe, who now came to his relief. The lieutenant explained the matter to the rajah. But it was a long while before the ruler could reconcile himself to it.

However, he finally conformed to there gulation, and in a few words curtly given, sent his retinue from the deck.

For a moment in a spasm of offended dignity he seemed inclined to follow. But he quickly recovered. Turning away, he went forward and said nothing more until the air-ship was high in air.

Then his enthusiasm overcome all feelings of injured dignity and he rushed to the rail regarding the scene so far below, with eager satisfaction.

Frank let the Sky Scraper mount full a thousand feet into the air. Then he set his course for the Mejum city.

Of course it did not take long to make the journey.

What required two days of laborious marching for the Hindoo soldiers the Sky Scraper could accomplish in a few hours.

It was in the middle of the afternoon that Mejum came to view. Then all crowded to the rail to get a look at the Hindoo city.

It was situated upon the side of a mountain and seemed to be a collection of stone houses, some of them several stories in height.

Around the city there was a high wall of stone and upon this were mounted a number of cannon which had been secured in some battle with the English.

The Mejums were really considered one of the strongest tribes in India. They were skillful fighters and very courageous.

At sight of the Mejum city, the Kampoor Rajah seemed much affected.

"If sahib can destroy that city!" he cried, "he will be the first to do it, for hundreds of years the Mejums have ruled the Mountain of Nepal."

Frank smiled at this.

"It is easy for me to do that!" he said. "And yet I have no desire to do so. Indeed, if the Rajah will only deliver up the white prison, I will do him no harm."

Munyadi shook his head.

"No use, sahib!" he said, "he will not & that. You will have to tame him."

"Then let it be so!" cried Frank, "tame him, I will."

The Sky-Scraper now hung over the walled city. It was a thrilling scene which was spread below.

The natives seemed out in force, and the whole city was thrown into a great state of excitement at sight of the air-ship.

Great crowds swarmed upon the house-tops and the city walls. Many were foolish enough to shoot arrows up toward the aerial monster with apparent hope that it would bring him down.

Frank was undecided just how to open a parley with the Mejum rajah.

He consulted Holcombe, who in turn interviewed Munyadi. The latter suggested that they descend until one of the guards could be spoken on the city wall.

This seemed a good idea. Munyadi volunteered to act as interpreter.

So the Sky Scraper was allowed to settle down until it was but a few hundred feet above the walls of the city.

The air was full of flying arrows, and great crowds of the natives surged below. But when Munyadi appeared at the rail and addressed them in their own tongue they subsided.

They listened with apparent interest to the words of the Kampoor rajah.

A sentinel on the wall opened a parley with Munyadi. The latter would then interpret to Frank and Holcombe.

"We send greeting to Mejum!" said Munyadi, with a flourish. "We are masters of the air and kings of the clouds. But we come not to destroy nor to injure."

"Greeting to the flying people," replied the guard. "How shall we serve you?"

"We ask only that which is right, and will do you no harm if we are given it."

"We will serve the great rajah."

"We ask for the English girl whom your noble rajah now holds a prisoner. Give her up to us and we depart."

The guard returned an evasive answer, and

declared that he would send word to the Mejum ruler.

Some time passed before the Mejum rajah appeared on the scene.

He was a powerful built and savage looking fellow; yet it could be seen that he was impressed with the appearance of the air-ship.

Munyadi opened parley with him, and made his formal demand for the release of Alice Bright.

The Mejum rajah listened suavely, and then made reply:

"The flying Englishmen may return the way they came. The English girl has promised to remain in the palace of Mejum."

When Munyadi translated this reply Holcombe was so bitterly enraged that he sprang to the rail and cried fiercely:

"That is a lie!"

Of course his words were not understood by the Mejum rajah, but his manner created a sensation.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE PALACE—THE THUG.

FRANK would have restrained the impetuous young lieutenant, but he was not quite quick enough.

The effect upon the Mejum rajah was most peculiar.

He gave a loud shout and flung up his arms. Instantly the whole crowd of Hindoos set up a yell and began to make hostile demonstrations toward the air-ship.

Frank pulled Holcombe back just in time to prevent his being perforated by several bullets, for a number of the natives had guns.

"What did you do that for?" cried the young inventor, regretfully. "It was very wrong!"

"Wrong!" fumed Holcombe. "Wrong to refute that lie? Let me down there and I'll fight them single handed!"

"Don't be a fool!" protested Frank. "You are most unwise!"

"Am I? Well, so be it. Blow up the whole set of them. We can rescue Alice in no other way."

"Well, it looks as if we will have to now," declared Frank.

"Look here!" cried Holcombe testily. "What harm was there in my words?"

"A great deal," replied Frank. "You have broken the parley."

"What would have come of it?"

"It is hard to tell. I think, however, that we could have impressed our superiority upon that villain to such an extent that we could have got Alice without bloodshed."

"Don't you believe it!" declared Holcombe forcibly. "You could have done nothing of that sort. I tell you, the only way to bring them to terms is to go for them hammer and tongs."

One thing was certain, however. The parley was ended, and an attempt to open another proved futile.

Frank decided upon quick and sure action. He had no idea, however, of battering down the city.

He was always averse to bloodshed. A plan had occurred to him which he hastened to put into action.

It was safe to conclude that Alice was held a captive in the palace of the rajah.

This building, as near as the rescuers could guess, was a stone structure in the center of the walled city, and much more pretentious in its size than any other.

Frank decided to sail the air-ship over to this and drive the natives from it with the needle gun. Then some of the party could descend, and entering the palace rescue Alice.

The other voyagers met this plan with favor.

Holcombe, Frank and Barney were to do the invading of the palace. The others, Vaneyke, Pomp and Munyadi were to keep the Mejums at bay.

It required but a very short time to arrange the programme.

Meanwhile, the Mejums were trying to elevate their cannon so as to bombard the Sky Scrapper.

But while they were thus engaged, Frank coolly sailed away and over the rajah's palace. The effect upon the Mejums was thrilling to witness.

At once they gave pursuit.

Frank allowed the air-ship to descend until it was right over the front entrance to the palace. Then he brought the needle gun out.

He depressed the muzzle and sent a bolt of dynamite down into the street. The effect was awful.

A great pit was torn in the paving and the natives were driven back before the terrible blast.

But others rushed forward to take their places, and for a time there was thrilling work. The air was filled with flying missiles.

Frank sent another bolt into another street. A literal barricade of debris was raised.

Such awful lightning like visitations the Mejums could not comprehend. It seemed like superhuman work.

But yet they swarmed forward in legions toward the rajah's palace. That dignitary himself could be seen in the van trying to incite them.

Frank could have slaughtered hundreds of them from his commanding position, but he took care not to fire into the throng.

Always the bolt was directed to strike in front of them and simply drive them back.

And this scheme worked to perfection. Indeed the Mejums could not reach the palace, and the dreadful dynamite gun so easily and quickly manipulated, held them at bay in every direction.

Satisfied at length that he had the mob under control, Frank now threw a long rope ladder over the rail.

Arming himself, he cried to Holcombe and Barney:

"Come! let us go down!"

It was an exciting moment for Holcombe. All depended upon their success in finding Alice.

If she was in the palace and safe, she might be rescued. But there was a possibility that she was not.

Over the air-ship's rail the three daring rescuers went.

For a few moments their position was a risky and most unenviable one, for the air was yet thick with flying arrows.

But most of these were spent before they reached the air-ship. It did not take long to slide down the ladder and into a little courtyard.

The three plucky rescuers had no means of knowing what they would meet upon entering the palace.

It might be filled with armed men for aught they knew.

In that case it would be necessary to fight. The result could not be foretold. Yet they had no thought of turning back.

Frank led the way through an arras hung doorway and they were in the inner court of the palace.

Here a number of Hindoo women crouched upon rugs about and appeared to be in awful terror.

Holcombe who had a smattering of the Hindoo tongue addressed one of them.

He asked for Alice, but the woman would not reply. Whether from terror or obduracy it was not easy to say.

Holcombe tried another of the women. She replied in an unknown tongue. Then the young Englishman feigned anger and drew his pistol.

This had a magical effect. One of the women pointed to some broad stairs leading down into the depths of a subterranean passage.

At once he started thither. The steps were rough hewn and broad. Down them the young lieutenant rushed.

He did not look back to see if his companions were following. Into a passageway he dashed. Just ahead through the gloom he saw a dimly burning light.

Beyond it was a grated cell door. Holcombe felt sure that this was the prison cell of his love.

With wildly beating heart, he rushed forward. Down the long passage he went.

"Alice, Alice!" he cried, yearningly. "Are you not here?"

Then a startling thing happened.

In his eager haste, he had not noticed a crouching form by the side of the passage. Swift as a panther this was launched upon him.

Holcombe made an instinctive move to save himself.

In that moment he felt an awful thrill of horror, for he saw something flash over his head which he knew the meaning of.

It was the deadly cord, which the Hindoo thug knows so well how to use. He made a frantic effort to intercept it.

But swift as the lightning flash, and true to the mark it came. He felt the cold coil about his throat. There was a pressure, stars flashed before his vision and he believed himself lost.

CHAPTER XXII.

FAREWELL TO INDIA.

IN that awful moment Sydney Holcombe believed death upon him. To escape the cord of the Thug seemed impossible.

But it was not ordained that death should overtake him so summarily. Fate was not thus so unkind.

He had been so eager in his attempt to reach the grated door of the prison cell in which he believed Alice would be found, that he had failed to heed anything else in his path.

But the moment the Hindoo murderer sprang upon him and the deadly cord flashed before his eyes, he realized exactly in what a desperate predicament he was.

The work of the Thug is quick and deadly. To avoid it only the quickest of action can be made.

And he acted quickly, but it would not have saved him, had it not been for other interference.

As it chanced, Barney and Frank Reade, Jr., had followed the impetuous young Englishman down the stairs. It was fortunate for him that they did so.

Just in time Frank saw the lightning-like leap of the Thug. The young inventor realized the need of quick action.

No man was quicker on the draw or more deadly in aim than Frank Reade. Instantly his pistol went up.

He saw the murderous cord flash through the air, and simultaneously with the movement he pulled the trigger.

The cord had pressed young Holcombe's windpipe. In another moment the steel-like grip of the Hindoo would have disintegrated his spinal column.

But the bullet, swift as powder could propel it, struck the arm of the Thug. It shattered the elbow and the cord dropped loosely at the would-be victim's feet.

While with a mad yell of agony the Hindoo fell in a faint, The next moment Frank and Barney caught Holcombe's tottering form.

"My God! don't tell me the Thug accomplished his work!" cried Frank, frantically. "I will not have it so. Ah, thank Heaven, he lives!"

"Be me sowl, that's thrue!" cried Barney, joyfully. "Shure it was a close call!"

"You are right, my friends!" gasped Holcombe, as he recovered from the effects of the strangling, "but for you, though, I would now be a dead man!"

"Mercy on us, but how could you be so careless!" cried Frank. "Didn't you realize the risk of rushing alone into this place?"

"No," replied the young lieutenant; "I thought only of Alice. Ah! I believe she is beyond that door. Alice, speak to me!"

As the young Englishman's clear, firm tones rang out, to the general surprise, an answer came, in a sweet, thrilling, feminine voice:

"Sydney! Heaven be praised! You have come to save me!"

"I have—I have!" cried the young lieutenant, fervently. "Tell me that they have not harmed you!"

Then he flung himself against the cell door. Beneath his weight it yielded. The next moment he crashed into the cellar-like apartment and clasped the slight form of Alice Bright in his arms.

But there was little time for explanations or story telling. The tumult from the streets and the roaring of the dynamite gun were proofs of this.

"Let us get back to the Sky Scrapper!" cried Frank. "Our lives may depend on it. Then we can talk."

"Right!" cried Holcombe, as he half carried Alice from the cell. "Back to the air-ship!"

And up the stairs they dashed. Across the court-yard, past the groups of Hindoo women and out into the outer court.

Dr. Vaneyke and Munyadi above caught Frank's signal and threw over the rope ladder. At sight of the air-ship Alice was half dazed with wonderment.

"Mercy on us!" she exclaimed. "What is that? Are we going up there, Sydney?"

"Yes," replied the young lieutenant, excitedly. "Ask no questions. Just hang onto this rope and trust in me."

The lieutenant quickly knotted the rope under her arms. Then he gave the signal to those above.

Alice was quickly drawn up and aboard the Sky Scrapper.

This had scarcely been accomplished when a party of Hindoo soldiers burst into the inner court.

They were brandishing their swords and spears excitedly and rushing toward the escaping voyagers savagely. There was not a moment to lose.

"Give them a volley!" cried Frank.

All three fired at the advancing natives, and this called them to a temporary halt. It served the purpose intended, which was to give the voyagers time to gain the deck of the Sky Scraper.

Up the rope ladder they went. A number of missiles followed them. One arrow cut a hole in Barney's coat sleeve, but no further harm was done.

Once on board the Sky Scraper they could laugh at their foes. Cheers were given, which were answered by the yells of the discomfited crew below.

Munyadi, the Kampoor rajah, was much impressed. He approached Frank, and with shining eyes made an astounding proposition. "We will conquer India!" he declared. "Sahib, we can subject every tribe in the empire, and drive the English out. You shall be made emperor."

But Frank politely declined. Not wishing to offend the Kampoor ruler, he took the pains to explain that on account of vast interests in America he would be compelled to abandon so glorious a project.

Munyadi, however, was not to be abashed so easily. Another happy idea came to him, and his face brightened.

"Sahib will loan his flying boat to Munyadi and he will pay him a princely sum for the use of it. Munyadi will sit upon the throne of India."

Frank explained that his engagements with the air-ship would utterly prevent any such a plan. He deeply regretted this. The rajah looked incredulous, but was forced to be content.

The air-ship now took flight away from the Mejum's city.

Alice was assured that there were none of the members of the English regiment spared by the bloodthirsty Mejums. She and Lieut. Holcombe were the sole survivors.

Her eyes filled with the recollections of her father's awful fate, but Sydney Holcombe whispered cheering words to her.

It was decided to proceed to the military post at Lucknow.

But first it was necessary to take Munyadi back to his home.

The army of Kampoors was met scarcely half way between the two cities. As nothing was to be gained by the Kampoors assaulting the Mejum's town, they turned back in their march.

Munyadi joined them and regretfully took leave of the Sky Scraper.

As the air-ship sailed away, he sat upon his horse watching it wistfully until it was a mere speck in the distant sky.

The trip to Lucknow was quickly made. The arrival of the air-ship created a sensation.

The entire town and garrison turned out. Salutes were fired and the commandant, a peppery little English martinet, met the visitors with the necessary red tape.

Lieut. Holcombe and Alice took leave of Frank Reade, Jr., and his companions with deepest emotions of regret and of gratitude.

"We shall return to England at once!" he declared. "I have had enough of India and I shall leave the service. I think we can be happy in old England!"

And he looked tenderly at Alice, who smiled and said:

"I think we can too!"

"I congratulate you both!" said Frank, warmly. "I hope to see you again some time and would be pleased to welcome you to Readstown."

"You may be sure we shall never forget you and your great kindness," declared Holcombe, warmly.

A fete was given the aerial travelers that night in Lucknow. The next morning Frank Reade, Jr., announced his future course.

"I intend to proceed in a direct line to Bombay," he declared, "thence I shall cross the Arabian Sea to Cape Guardafin at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden. Then on to the sources of the Nile and Tanganyika Lake, thence a flight through Southern Africa to Cape Town."

The British guards paraded and fired a farewell salute.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke stood on the deck and waved the American flag. Up into the air sprang the Sky Scraper.

"Begorra, it's sorry I am that we are afther

leavin' India!" cried Barney. "Shure, it's a foine toime we've had here!"

"Golly, but jes' yo' wait until we gits to de Dark Continent!" said Pomp, showing his ivory-ies in a happy grin.

"Yes," agreed Dr. Vaneyke with Barney, "I have enjoyed our experience in India. Yet, as Pomp says, we will no doubt find interesting events and scenes in Africa."

"Farewell to India!" cried Frank as the Sky Scraper shot zenithward. "Farewell to the land of Pagan mystery and heathenism—of darkness and degradation and crime!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE ABYSSINIAN DESERT.

ALTHOUGH Frank set his course for Bombay he had no intention of making a stop there.

Much interesting country was passed over, and the city of western India itself presented a unique and interesting appearance. Then the vast waters of the Arabian Sea lay to the horizon line.

Whether the appearance of the Sky Scraper interested the people any or not as it passed over Bombay, the aerial travelers could not say.

They were but a speck in the sky, at such an altitude was the air-ship.

The sail across the Arabian Sea was not varied by any thrilling incident.

Studying the water so far below with a glass occasionally various odd-looking craft were seen. The day proved fair, however, and the sea was calm.

It was night of the second day when Cape Guardafin was sighted.

This was a mighty promontory of precipitous rock with sheer descents. Frank allowed the air-ship to descend as they passed over it until small objects were easily seen.

The Singoli mountains a small range were left to the north. Frank kept the air-ship more to the southward. The region below them was known as Omali, and was a part of Southern Abyssinia.

The region was rough and rocky and very sparsely settled, the people being composed mostly of tribal clans, Arabs and wandering nomads.

As the machinery of the Sky Scraper had now stood for a long time a tremendous strain Frank thought it best to select some suitable place and descend, and make camp for the night.

Accordingly a green valley between high and rocky hills was selected.

Here a pleasant spot was found not far from the shore of a small lake. The air-ship was anchored, and then the aerial travelers had an opportunity to stretch their legs on terra firma.

It is needless to say that they gladly availed themselves of this opportunity. Darkness was yet an hour distant.

The doctor at once spied what he believed to be the ruins of some ancient city just at the base of the hills.

At once he set off on an exploring tour. Barney and Pomp were anxious for a swim and started for the lake.

When they reached it Barney took up some of the water in the palm of his hand and tasted it.

The wry face he made up and the exclamation which escaped him was comical enough.

"Wough! Ugh! Whurroo!" he sputtered, "phwat the devil have I done? Shure an' it's pizened I am!"

"Wha' am dat yo' say, I'ish?" said Pomp, proceeding to strip. "Wha' done yo' take yo' plunge?"

"Bejabers I'll niver bathe in thim wathers!" cried Barney in disgust. "Shure they're wuss nor a pig pen. Begorra, no! I'll niver do that."

"Don' see nuffin' de matter!" said Pomp, innocently.

"Don't yez?" said Barney, with a sudden bright thought. "Well, naygur, it's just me disposition. Go right ahead and I'll folly yez—perhaps," the latter under his breath.

Pomp was dying for a swim. The water was as clear as crystal, the sands white and inviting. He could see nothing the matter with them. He had not seen Barney taste the water, so he became an easy victim as the sly and fun-loving Celt hoped that he would.

The Irishman knew that the water was extremely saline. Indeed so bitter was it that he had been nearly gagged by it. He chuckled inwardly as he thought of the experience in store for Pomp.

"Begorra, he'll be afther having all the fun he wants now," he muttered under his breath. "O'il see the fun!"

Barney made believe to pull off his coat and shoes as if he also intended to bathe. Pomp was completely deceived. But the Celt was very careful to allow Pomp to enter the water first.

The darky waded in and Barney stood watching him with a broad grin upon his face. Pomp waded out to his arm-pits and then soused himself. He made a long dive out into the lake.

He was under but a few seconds, and when he came up his face was like a comic valentine.

He could hardly get his breath and struck out for the shore wildly.

"Huh! Um! br-ugh! Golly sakes alibe, wha' am de mattah?"

His feet struck the bottom and he rushed out with all speed. Then he fell to retching violently.

Barney was doubled up with mad hilarity. This angered Pomp and he yelled:

"Fo' de Lor' why didn't yo' tell me all about dat ar? Yo' jes' wanted fo' to see me go dat-a-way. Golly, I'se gwine to pay yo' back fo' dat!"

The darky ejected the saline water from his mouth and made a mad dash at the Celt.

"Begorra, av yez was such a fool as that shure it was no fault av mine!" cried the Celt. But Pomp was not in a mood to listen to reason.

He made a straight line for Barney. The latter bolted down the sandy beach. As Pomp was just about to come up with him an astounding thing happened.

Both went out of sight in a twinkling. It was exactly as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

They had stepped into a veritable species of quicksand. It was almost of the consistency of lime and water thinly slacked. Down they went into this mass. But fortunately, unlike the ordinary quicksand, it did not close over them forever.

They came up a second later, and floundered about in the liquid slough like two ungainly porpoises. Spluttering and swearing they crept out on terra firma much disgusted.

"Bejabers, phwere am I?" gasped Barney, as he vainly tried to dig the sand from his eyes. "Phwat happened anyway?"

"Golly, I'se nigh dead!" spluttered Pomp, ejecting huge quantities of sand and water from his mouth.

"Begorra, naygur, it's two fools we air. Phwat do yez say?"

Pomp straightened himself up as well as he could and blinked at Barney.

"I ain't no objection to yo' callin' yo'self a fool," he said, curtly, "but Ah don't want yo' to call me dat."

Barney greeted this with a roar of laughter. Then he began to ridicule Pomp.

"It's a foine lukin' dude yez are now. Shure yez wud spile a fottygraf. Go an wid yez for a bag av sand!"

"Ain' no wuss nor you am I!" retorted Pomp. "Don't yo' gib me no mo' ob yo' sass, chile!"

Both had partly wrung out their wet garments by this time. But before they could proceed further with their conversation a startling sound called them to their senses.

This was the distant crack of a rifle. In an instant Barney sprang up and gazed toward the Sky Scraper. A most startling sight was revealed.

The air-ship was yet in its place of anchorage. But upon the further side of it and halted upon a ridge of land was a cavalcade of horsemen.

They were Bedouin Arabs beyond all possibility of doubt.

Both Barney and Pomp well knew the character of these nomads of the desert. They were robbers, cutthroats and thieves.

Frank Reade, Jr., was alone on the Sky Scraper's deck.

He had fired the shot to warn Barney and Pomp. It had the desired effect and two more startled individuals it would be hard to imagine.

"Golly fo' glory!" yelled Pomp, "does yo' see dat ar, I'ish?"

"Begorra, av coarse I do."

"Dey am Arabs!"

"Shure as ye're alive!"

"I done fink if dey get deir eyes on us we're done fo'!"

"Bejabers, thin let us get back to the Skoy Scraper, an' at wanst! Shure, Misther Frank has called us!"

They lost no time in heeding the summons. Straight for the air-ship they started at full speed.

And it was remarkable good speed that they made. Half the distance was covered before the Bedouins saw them.

The Arabs had been regarding the Sky Scaper with something like profound astonishment.

To them it had the appearance of a sailing craft transferred from the bosom of the Gulf of Aden or the Red Sea to this fertile, green spot in the valley.

But the sight of Barney and Pomp dispelled their lethargy.

They recognized human beings, and of a different nationality. It was not their way ever to inquire into a matter of the sort. It mattered not how the white men came there. They were there, and recognized as lawful prey by the Bedouins.

Like a cloud that band of desert riders came swooping down and surrounded the air-ship.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FIGHT WITH BEDOUINS.

BUT fortunately, before they succeeded in doing this, Barney and Pomp reached the rail of the Sky Scaper.

Onto the deck they scrambled. Then the Arabs fired a volley.

The bullets rattled against the steel body of the Sky Scaper and one scraped the back of Pomp's hand. No further damage was done, however.

"Begorra, it's by the skin av our teeth!" cried Barney. "Shure, I thought it was the end av us fer shure."

"Wha' am yo' gwine to do, Marse Frank?" screamed Pomp. "Shall we get up de anchors, sah?"

"No," replied Frank, quickly. "Bring out your elephant rifles and plenty of shells, quick. We must fight!"

Barney and Pomp needed no second bidding. Under ordinary circumstances Frank would have ordered an ascension.

But he knew that Vaneyke was at the ruins upon the hillside. To leave him was out of the question.

There were perhaps a score of the mounted Bedouins.

They were stalwart, savage-looking fellows, and armed to the teeth. They rode horses of pure Arabian breed, and fleet as the wind.

Failing to stop Barney and Pomp, they circled about the Sky Scaper, firing at it the while.

Frank knew well enough their murderous character, so he did not hesitate to fire in return.

In the cover of the pilot-house the three voyagers opened fire upon the Bedouins. The air-ship was being hotly peppered by the wretches.

Frank could have annihilated them with the needle gun. But he believed that he could drive them back with the rifles.

So the firing was kept up with disastrous results for the Bedouins.

The shells thrown, striking under a horse and rider, would blow both into eternity. And the aim of the aerial voyagers was most deadly and true.

So the Bedouins did not succeed in getting any nearer to the Sky Scaper. Finally, after losing a fifth of their number, they rode away.

They proceeded to a safe distance and there called a consultation. While engaged in this, Frank and Barney and Pomp pulled in the anchors.

The air-ship was all ready to start. But Frank did not wish to do so without first rescuing Dr. Vaneyke.

The scientist had been making some brilliant discoveries in the ruin, and had been oblivious of any danger until he heard the report of the rifles.

Then he saw the Bedouins, and fully realized his peril.

Hastily he collected his specimens and crept out of sight behind a ledge of rocks. When the Bedouins retired, he came out and made straight for the air-ship.

The Arabs saw him and at once spurred their horses toward him. Frank saw that the doctor could not possibly reach the air-ship before being overtaken.

It was a critical moment.

But the young inventor's wits were at the fore. Hastily he prepared for an attempt to save Vaneyke's life.

He threw over the rail a rope ladder. Then he rushed into the pilot-house.

Frank threw open the electric lever. The air-ship leaped up into the air and shot forward. The next moment it was passing over Vaneyke's head.

The rope ladder was dragging on the ground. The scientist embraced the scheme instantly. He caught hold of the ropes and the next moment was high in air.

A number of Bedouin bullets followed him, but fortunately did not hit him.

Up two thousand feet shot the Sky Scaper. All the while the doctor was climbing up the ladder.

It had been a close pinch for him, but he had been saved by Frank's quick and ready idea.

Over the rail the doctor went and was met joyfully by his fellow voyagers.

"Mercy, doctor!" exclaimed Frank. "I had nearly given you up for lost."

"Well, I had about given up hope myself," replied the scientist, "but is it not a pity that we should be cheated out of so delightful a camping place. And darkness is close at hand now!"

This was true.

It began to look as if it would be necessary to pass another night in the clouds. But just as the shadows grew thick Frank spied another good camping place.

This was upon the bank of a wide river in which was a tremendous cataract. The air-ship descended in a favorable spot.

There was not a sign of human life about the place and Frank did not believe that they would be troubled again by wandering foes. So camp was again made.

The search-light was turned on and allowed to play upon the falls. A most gorgeous scene was the result.

The falling water was in mighty volume and all colors of the rainbow showed in the falling spray.

All were fatigued with the day's doings and were disposed to retire. Barney and Pomp were to watch alternately.

Morning came bright and clear. The sun shone in a sky of burnished brass. The heat was something powerful.

There was a clump of palms by a little spring not far from the river. Here Frank and Dr. Vaneyke went to get a drink of water.

They had barely reached the place when a startled cry from Barney and Pomp caused them to turn back.

The reason was quickly apparent.

Out in the middle of the river, and being borne down by the swift current toward the cataract, was a man clinging to an overturned boat of the skiff pattern.

He could not hope to stem the powerful current, and his fate seemed to be sealed.

Carried over the cataract, death would be certain.

For a moment Frank and Dr. Vaneyke stood petrified with horror.

They saw that the emperilled man was a European, probably an Englishman.

He had seen the white men on the shore, and made a frantic, appealing gesture for aid.

"My God!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, "he is going to his death!"

"Save him!" shouted Frank Reade, Jr.

"Barney, you know what to do!"

Frank had shouted to Barney because he knew that he could not reach the Sky Scaper in time to act.

The Celt was on the air-ship's deck, and instantly acted.

"Over with the ladder, naygur!" he screamed to Pomp.

Then he rushed into the pilot-house. Up sprang the air-ship. Out over the cataract it went like a bird.

There was a bare chance of saving the endangered man. Pomp needed no second bidding.

The darcy threw the long rope ladder over the rail. Down it fell into the water. There it dragged.

And now Barney's nicety of calculation was demonstrated. So skillfully did he manipulate the air-ship that it hung for a moment directly over the drifting man.

It was almost within his grasp. It was a moment of awful suspense. Would he reach it?

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke each drew a deep breath. The drifting man saw the idea, though he seemed wonder struck at the spectacle.

Now his right hand went up. He had nigh grasped the ladder when—crack! the report of a rifle from the opposite side of the river rang out.

A sharp shriek of agony escaped the drowning man, and he seemed to give up the battle. Upon the opposite shore a band of armed Arabs had appeared.

"My God! that is awful!" shrieked Dr. Van-

eyke. "He cannot be saved now. That was a murderous deed!"

CHAPTER XXV.

INTO CENTRAL AFRICA.

BUT Dr. Vaneyke had spoken prematurely. It certainly seemed as if the drifting man's life was lost.

The bullet had struck his wrist just as he was about to clutch the ladder. But as was afterwards discovered it made but a flesh wound.

Sagacious Pomp had made instant action to remedy the mishap. He swung down another fold of the ladder. It writhed about the drowning man, and he was entangled in its folds.

There, not fifty feet from the verge of the falls, he was held. Pomp made no effort to draw him up.

To the contrary he simply held the rope ladder steady. Barney, seeing the idea, slowly propelled the Sky Scaper toward the shore.

Thus the fellow was drawn slowly but safely out of the swift current. He suddenly revived, and as his feet touched bottom crawled out upon the river bank.

He was saved! It was a clever bit of work. Frank and Dr. Vaneyke could not restrain their enthusiasm.

"You are heroes, Barney and Pomp!" he cried, as the air-ship descended. "Nobody could have done better."

"Thank God, I am among white men once more!" gasped the rescued man. "It is like transition to Paradise!"

As he stood dripping before them now his rescuers saw that he was a man of rare good looks, though scarcely clad, and with the appearance of one famished.

"It was a close call for you," declared Frank.

"Another moment and you would have been over those falls. That would have been certain death."

"You are right!" agreed the rescued man.

"I owe you my life. God bless you! You can scarcely fail to pity me when I have told you my story."

"We would be glad to hear it," replied Frank.

"I will make it brief," replied the stranger.

"My name is Wallace Foster. I am an explorer, and represent a bureau of exploration in London. My travels have carried me all over the world. I came out to Nubia a year ago to examine some ruins. I was attacked by Bedouins, and all my party killed but myself. For some reason I was spared and carried into captivity. I have been subjected to every indignity and torture since. But yesterday I escaped. Better death in the wilds for me than a continuance of such a life. I stole a small boat and embarked upon the river. All night I drifted. With daylight I heard the roar of these falls. I tried to get ashore, but the current was too swift. To you, kind sirs, I owe my life."

"Mr. Foster," cried Frank, warmly, "You are among friends. Fear no more!"

"A thousand thanks."

"But tell me, are not those your pursuers over across there?"

"Yes."

Frank smiled grimly.

"I'll fix them!" he said.

He went aboard the Sky Scaper and trained the needle gun. The Bedouins upon the opposite shore were making wild and fierce demonstrations.

Frank felt no compunction in slaughtering them.

"They are the scum of the earth!" he muttered. "Every one of them deserves to die!"

He drew careful aim and pressed the electric key. Straight to the mark went the electric bolt. It struck in the midst of the Bedouin crew. There was a dazzling flash of light, an unearthly explosion, and the air was filled with flying bodies.

Frank would have fired again, but the terrified remnant of the savage crew had made a lively retreat. Nothing more was seen of them.

Foster, the rescued traveler, had watched the exhibition of the electric gun with mouth agape.

"Upon my word!" he cried, "that beats anything I ever saw in the shooting line. It don't shoot gunpowder?"

"Oh, no," replied Frank. "It is an electric dynamite gun. The projectile is of dynamite."

"An invention of yours?"

"Yes."

"Well!" exclaimed the Englishman, heartily, "what will you Yankees get up next? Here

you've mastered the art of flying in the air, of submarine travel, and what is there left to accomplish? Indeed, it is wonderful!"

Foster went aboard the air-ship, and Frank showed him over it. He was more than pleased and wonder-struck.

"Now, I am going southward through Central Africa," Frank said. "I will be pleased to convey you to the nearest point of safety you will name, Mr. Foster."

"Indeed! I thank you!" replied the explorer. "One hundred miles south on this same river there is a trading post of Portuguese. I shall be safe there."

"And will you return to England?"

The explorer shook his head.

"No," he replied. "I have a determined purpose to finish the object of my explorations before going home. I will try and organize a new party there to complete it."

"I hope you will succeed," said Frank, warmly, "and I will leave you at the post you name."

The trading post named by Foster was named Obbia. It was really in an Italian province though a colony of Portuguese.

Everywhere in Africa one meets with the Portuguese. On account of their slave-trading propensities, they are really a curse to the country.

As there would doubtless be some risk in entering Obbia with the air-ship, Frank proposed to leave Foster just outside.

The traveler readily agreed to this and took farewell of his rescuers. It was at a point but a short distance removed from the town, and he would encounter no difficulty in reaching there.

The air-ship then mounted into the air and continued on its way to Central Africa. An adieu was waved to Foster, and then new and thrilling incidents began to claim the attention of our voyagers.

A straight course was now made for the supposed source of the Nile, the Victoria Nyanza Lakes.

It was a wild and wonderful country which the Sky Scrapper now took flight over.

The sandy deserts of Nubia were exchanged for the mighty jungles and forests of Central Africa.

Rugged and picturesque indeed was the scenery. Large villages of natives were seen below. Mighty rivers and broad lakes. Vast plains and deep forests.

But Frank did not deem it safe or wise to attempt a descent anywhere until Nyanza Lake should be sighted.

Once in the Congo Free State he knew that the natives were more inclined to be friendly. At least they had had intercourse with white men.

So the Sky Scrapper kept on day and night with the same steady pull. At time adverse winds were encountered, but on the whole good progress was made.

Until one day Frank announced that before nightfall they ought to be in sight of Nyanza Lake.

A mighty tract of forest was now being passed. The trees were of leviathan height and size, and so closely set together that nothing could be seen under them.

"That is a famous forest," Frank declared. "It is described by Stanley and Livingstone as so very dense that in portions the light of day is almost entirely shut out."

"Begorra, that's wonderful!" cried Barney. "Shure, howiver would wan find his way out?"

"No doubt it is difficult," replied Frank, "yet in those inky depths dwell the gorilla and the savage race of dwarfs."

"I wish we could descend long enough to make a study of these people," said Dr. Vaneyke, eagerly. "I would give much to be able to do so."

Frank hesitated a moment.

He was eager to reach the Congo Free State without further delay. But yet the request of the scientist did not seem unreasonable. He decided to grant it.

"We shall not lose much time," he declared. "Let it be so. We will do it."

Barney eagerly sprang to the Sky Scrapper's lever and slackened speed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE AFRICAN GORILLA.

POMP was as delighted as the others with the prospect of a descent.

The darky had kept close watch of the region which he knew was the home of his ancestors

or antecedents rather. He made no comment, however, until Barney railed him upon it.

"Well, naygur!" cried the hectoring Celt, in his blunt way. "Phwat do yez think av it? Wud yez like to go back to the castle av yure ancestors?"

"Don' yo' talk, I'ish!" spluttered Pomp. "I done fink mah ancestors am jes' as respectful as yo's any day!"

Barney wisely refrained from argument upon this question. But he said:

"Yez needn't get angry, naygur. Shure, thar's many a worse man than ye had ancestral castles!"

"Yo'sef, fo' instance!" said Pomp, keenly.

"Whurroo! do yez mane that fer an insult?"

"Jes' as yo' please, sah!"

"I'll break the head av yez."

"Jes' yo' try it!"

Barney doubled up his fists and Pomp lowered his head. That there would have been a lively ruction right away was certain had not Barney been suddenly called aft by Frank Reade.

The Sky Scrapper settled down rapidly, and Frank selected a small clearing in the mighty forest, and which was the only visible one.

They were now in the very heart of the mighty woods. As the Sky Scrapper settled down and rested upon a heap of underbrush, the tangled wilds and inky arches of the forest were upon all sides.

It was an impressive spectacle.

Our adventurers had no idea of the enormous height of the trees until they were actually at their base.

Then they walked the deck of the Sky Scrapper and looked up in abject wonder.

"Upon my word!" gasped Dr. Vaneyke, "I have never seen anything like them in my life. Is it not wonderful?"

"Indeed it is," agreed Frank Reade, "but I'm thinking we shall need an electric light to invade that forest."

"So we shall."

"And so we will!" cried Frank with inspiration. "I will take a coil of wire along with us, and carry a thousand candle light which I have in the cabin."

With his native ingenuity it did not take Frank long to rig up the electric search lamp. Then plans were made for an excursion into the black forest.

Barney was deputized to guard the Sky Scrapper until the return of the others. The good-natured Celt did not demur.

He would much have liked to go with Frank and the doctor, but he said:

"All roight, naygur, yez kin go now, but it'll be my turn next toime."

Of course an encounter with any of the denizens of the mighty forest would be far from pleasant or safe. So all went well armed.

Rifles and pistols were carried and Pomp carried the search-lamp.

Leaving the air-ship the party boldly entered the black forest. For a time there was some climbing through dense shrubbery.

But after a time the woods were entered and found to be carpeted with leaves and quite clear of brush.

But upward to a tremendous height rose the smooth straight trunks of the trees.

As in most tropical countries the foliage was all at the top. But it was so dense that the light of day was almost excluded. Indeed, objects were not visible fifty yards distant.

The gloom was of a peculiar somber kind. Even the habitues of the forest seemed to partake of it.

The birds which flew about were noiseless and songless. The monkeys went shadow-like from limb to limb, not even chattering at the invaders.

Truly it was a region of silence and of darkness. Our adventurers could not help being deeply impressed.

"Wonderful, is it not?" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, who was busy gathering some odd botanical specimens. "Is it possible that human beings inhabit these solitudes?"

"Yes, it is!" declared Frank. "Wait and you shall see."

The party pushed forward deeper into the forest.

Suddenly all were brought to a halt by a distant and startling sound. It was like the hoarse roar of a maddened beast.

And yet there was an accent in it which seemed almost human. For a moment not one of the party spoke.

All had instinctively comprehended the meaning of that sound, and the impression made was a thrilling one. Indeed, the thought

of facing a live gorilla in his native wilds was not a pleasant one.

"The gorilla!" finally said Dr. Vaneyke in a hushed voice.

"Yes," agreed Frank, "that is the king of the forest, without doubt."

"Golly, Marse Frank!" gasped Pomp, who was much terrified, "I fink I done heah dat a bullet won't go froo de hide ob a gorilla."

"Well, I've heard something of that sort myself," said Frank, mischievously.

"Massy sakes alibe, Marse Frank!" cried the darky. "I done fink we bettah hab de needle gun fo' him."

"Well, I don't believe but that our Winchester's will throw a hot enough bullet for him," said Frank. "We will risk it anyway."

Once more the strange, unearthly cry went through the forest.

This time it sounded nearer. Also it was followed by a crashing of brush.

"He has sighted us!" declared Frank. "He is coming this way."

"Golly, but we kain't see him," said Pomp, with chattering teeth, and looking as if he would like to break and run.

"Turn on the search-light," said Frank;

"then we can tell."

Pomp hastily pressed the valve. The current was on, and the powerful light went searching into the forest depths.

It had the desired effect.

There stood the gorilla between two trees, a monster of his species. He was truly a frightful sight.

He was of great height, and yet immense breadth. The muscles of his body and limbs were something enormous, being ox-like.

The head was low and flat, with huge glaring eyeballs, a flat nose and animal jaws, with protruding fangs. The human like characteristics of the beast only served to increase his hideousness.

The explorers stood for a moment quite overcome with the fearful spell which one is always subject to in the presence of this terrible monster.

Pomp was the picture of the most abject terror.

The darky was generally very plucky in times of danger, but now his knees shook and his teeth chattered like castanets.

Yet he continued to focus the search-light upon the gorilla.

The beast seemed dazzled as well as perplexed by the brilliant light. It also seemed to enrage him.

He brandished the huge club which he held in his hand and started forward. But in ten steps the beast halted.

Loud and terrible were the roars with which the gorilla filled the air. The two men, Frank and Vaneyke, could have shot the beast then and there, but they were desirous of studying the beast as far as possible.

So they did not fire. But Pomp was every moment becoming more frightened.

In their intense interest in watching the actions of the gorilla, they did not heed Pomp. The darky suddenly cried:

"Golly, Marse Frank, I'se done skeered to deaf. I can't stay no longer. He will git dis chile fo' sho'!"

Then, with a mad yell, Pomp dropped the electric lens and started madly for the clearing. The effect was thrilling.

It left Dr. Vaneyke and Frank facing the beast in the gloom, which now in the transition so sudden from the glare of the electric light made it seem to them almost utter darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BATTLE WITH THE DWARFS.

THE crazy move of Pomp had placed the lives of Dr. Vaneyke and Frank Reade Jr., in great jeopardy.

Had the gorilla advanced upon them in that bewildering moment of darkness, he would have had them at his mercy.

But as good fortune had it, the beast did not advance just then.

Frank was the first to recover his senses. With an angry cry he reached down and picked up the fallen lens.

The probable reason why the gorilla had not taken advantage of their confusion was probably because his vision also was dazzled by the electric light.

But the moment Frank picked up the lamp and once more focused it, the gorilla let out a terrific yell.

Instantly brandishing the club he started for his foes.

Frank saw that it was best to take no chances, so he cried:

"Give it to him, doctor. Fire low!"

The doctor needed no second bidding. Instantly he fired.

The bullet struck the beast after examination showed. But it was not in a vital part. The next moment Dr. Vaneyke's gun was dashed from his grasp and splintered into fragments and he received a blow which knocked him into insensibility.

Only the quickest of work upon Frank Reade, Jr.'s part saved the day. He flashed the electric light full in the gorilla's face and pulled the trigger of his rifle.

Frank was obliged to hold the rifle with one hand. But so tightly did he grip it that the bullet went true to the mark.

The gorilla dropped in a quivering heap with the blood welling in a torrent from its mouth. The bullet had pierced the heart and death was instantaneous.

Frank saw this and then turned his attention to Dr. Vaneyke.

The doctor lay senseless upon the ground. But Frank saw that beyond being stunned he was unhurt.

The young inventor at once drew a flask from his bosom and gave the stricken scientist a deep draught. He at once revived and sat up.

"Frank!" he gasped. "Thank Heaven you are unhurt! And the gorilla?"

"Is badly hurt," said Frank, with a laugh.

"Did you kill him?"

"Yes."

"Good for you! I want his skin."

The doctor recovered very quickly. He was soon upon his feet. An examination was then made of the gorilla.

"The missing link," said Dr. Vaneyke, facetiously. "No doubt Darwin would have liked this specimen. But what if his mate is in the vicinity?"

"It would be well to return to the air-ship now," said Frank. "We can return for the skin later."

"But where is Pomp?"

The two men exchanged glances, and then laughed. It was amusing.

"Pomp is a very valiant fellow," said Dr. Vaneyke. "We needed his assistance."

"Well, I think he is excusable," said Frank. "I have heard of the very bravest of men—those who would unhesitatingly face a battery of guns—turn pale and even faint at sight of the African gorilla."

"Well, I believe you are right," agreed the doctor. "We'll have to excuse Pomp. Indeed, I felt very queer myself, and when that big fellow was upon me I was horror struck."

It was decided to return to the air-ship. But even as Frank was picking up the electric wire a startling thing happened.

A lithe javelin came hissing through the air and struck Dr. Vaneyke's hat. It pierced and carried it from his head, and stuck in the ground just beyond.

A narrow escape indeed! Just the fraction of an inch nearer and it would have been the end of the scientist.

He gave a startled leap in the air.

"By Cicero!" he gasped. "What was that, Frank?"

"Quick, get behind a tree!" shouted the young inventor.

The doctor was none too quick. Frank had sent the search-light's rays into the forest, and a startling sight was revealed.

A legion of diminutive forms had appeared, and were dodging from tree to tree. They were the fighting dwarfs, who made the dark forest their home.

Friends with nobody were these peculiar savages. Their nature was of the most murderous sort.

The sensations of the two attacked men can then be imagined. It was odds of one hundred to one.

Arrows and javelins came flying thickly through the air.

The dwarfs were rapidly advancing to the attack. Not a word did they utter, not a sound did they make above a slight rustling as they changed position.

There was something so unusual about their method of attack and their personal appearance that one was constrained to feel terror in spite of himself.

The little black fellows seemed literally to swarm in the black depths of the forest. The position of our adventurers was momentarily growing more risky.

They adopted the safest course of retreat pos-

sible, dodging from tree to tree, and fired upon the foe at every available opportunity.

"We were rash in venturing so far into the forest," said Frank.

"I fear we were!" agreed Dr. Vaneyke, "but if that cowardly dorky had stayed by us we might make a better stand!"

However they were every moment nearing the clearing.

And thus they were engaged in making their retreat, when suddenly both gave a start. There was a loud shout in their rear.

"What was that?" gasped the doctor.

"Are we attacked from the rear? If so we are lost."

"No!" cried Vaneyke, joyously. "It is reinforcements."

This was true.

It seemed that Pomp had gone back to the clearing in a state of great terror. Barney saw him and hailed him.

"Faith an' phwat are yez doing there?" shouted the Celt. "Phwere iver is Misther Frank and the docther?"

"Don' ask dis chile!" gasped Pomp. "De debbil am aftah us all."

Barney at once lit upon the dorky.

"Phwy don't yez answer!" he yelled.

"Phwere are they?"

"In de woods," replied the rattled dorky.

"Phwat did yez come back in this shape fer thin?"

"De debbil he cum arter us," replied Pomp.

"Dis chile jes' cut fo' de air-ship."

"An' lef' dem behind!" exclaimed Barney, angrily. "Yez are a foine soger, yez are. Why don't yez go back afther them?"

"Don' yo' talk, chile!" cried Pomp in agony.

"Ise jes' nebber gwine fo' to go inter dem woods agin, no nebber!"

"Begorra, thin yez must moind the air-ship!" cried Barney, "for it's mesilf as is going ter do thet!"

With which Barney grabbed his rifle and leaped down from the air-ship's deck. Pomp was only too glad to exchange places.

Into the forest dashed the Celt, all excitement, and eager for a fight of any kind. Fear was not one of the elements of his composition.

And as he ran on he suddenly heard the sound of firing right ahead.

He also saw the glare of the search-light.

"Bejabbers that's them!" he cried. "Shure it's a foight they're having!"

And this is how it happened that Dr. Vaneyke and Frank heard a shouting in the rear. It was Barney who was coming to their assistance.

The Celt rushed up breathlessly and at once opened fire on the dwarfs. The addition of even one made things look better for the fugitives.

A red hot fire was kept up, and the retreat was working famously, when Dr. Vaneyke suddenly exclaimed:

"My God! they have appeared in our rear, Frank. We are surrounded and are lost!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BATTLE WITH THE DWARFS.

THE announcement of Dr. Vaneyke that the dwarfs had appeared in their rear was a most disheartening one. It fell upon the ears of Frank Reade, Jr., like a death knell.

The young inventor knew better than to expect mercy of the dwarfs. He knew that they would be all massacred.

Where the little denizens of the black woods had come from was a mystery.

They seemed indeed to spring from the very ground. It was strange but true; the place was alive with them.

Very pale but resolute, Frank turned his head and saw the flitting forms of the dwarfs in his rear.

He realized full well that they were being surrounded. There was but one way to avert the catastrophe.

This was to make a break and run for life. Of course there was the possibility of being stricken down by an arrow or a javelin.

But it seemed that they stood a good show of being killed anyway. It was as well to accept this chance as to do anything else.

So Frank gave the word.

"About face and charge for the air-ship," he cried.

The order was instantly obeyed.

The three adventurers turned as with one accord and started on a mad run for the clearing. The dwarfs were evidently astonished.

Instantly they tried to close in upon the fugi-

tives. Arrows and javelins flew, but fortunately our friends escaped them.

The line of dwarfs between them and the Sky Scraper having just been made was thin. A number of them appeared in the path. But they were knocked over like puppets.

While the three aerial travelers actually succeeded in reaching the clearing without mishap. They were not even scratched.

The way they climbed aboard the air-ship was a caution to monkeys.

The dwarfs had been in hot pursuit. A few moments more and they would have boarded the air-ship.

But Frank shouted to Pomp as he rolled over the rail:

"Lively there, Pomp. Switch on the current. Set the lever."

The dorky needed no second bidding. He was only too glad to leave so unfavorable a spot. He obeyed and the air-ship like a bird leaped into space.

Up it shot, leaving the clearing and the angry dwarfs far below.

Dr. Vaneyke studied them awhile with a glass. But Frank did not return to court battle with them.

He had enough of that sort of thing. Straight to the southward he set the course of the Sky Scraper.

Victoria Nyanza Lake was crossed, and then the Kongo Free State was in view. Usindi Urrundi and Mogola were passed over. Then Lake Tanganyika came to view.

The aerial voyagers were now exactly over the heart of Africa. There was desire upon the part of all to spend some time in Kongo, but Frank could not agree to this.

"We are about half round the world!" he declared. "We have lost much time thus far. We must now make it up. I cannot agree to stop again until we get to Cape Town."

So a large part of Africa was passed hastily over.

Dr. Vaneyke was the most disappointed of any. But yet he said nothing.

"Never mind, doctor!" said Frank, cheerily, "we will take in that region some time on a special trip."

For days the Sky Scraper kept southward. Part of the time the altitude was so great that little could be seen of the country below.

But all were satisfied that Africa was a vast continent and destined in the no very distant future to be a wonderful part of the world's civilization.

"All these savage tribes of black natives," declared Dr. Vaneyke, "are passing away. The black man is going as the North American Indian did before the victorious march of the paleface!"

"That is true," agreed Frank, "there is no doubt but that Africa is the coming nation of the earth."

Barney and Pomp were by no means disposed to argue this point. Therefore for the lack of argument it was dropped.

But such time as the air-ship was near the earth, Dr. Vaneyke studied the scenes below.

And many and varied they were.

Great villages of blacks were passed over, towns and cities built by white settlers and also mighty tracts uninhabited by man.

In due course of time Cape Town was reached.

It was a beautiful clear morning when the Sky Scraper hovered over the quaint little town at the extremity of the African Continent. The appearance of the air-ship created a sensation in the town.

A brief stop was made and Frank paid his respects to the American consul. Hundreds, even thousands, of curious people inspected the air-ship.

Then, after gaining a fresh supply of provisions, Frank announced all in readiness for the longest flight they had yet taken.

"I shall proceed straight to Kerguelen Islands," he declared. "Then due south to Enderby Land and the Pole. Passing directly over the polar regions we will make Cape Horn and follow the South American continent home. This will complete our trip north and south around the world."

Barney and Pomp had already begun to think of home. They had been absent now long enough to feel a genuine appreciation for it.

"I'll be done glad fo' to see Readestown once mo'," declared Pomp. "I likes to trappel well enough but ah likes to get home too."

"Begorra yez are a good ways from it yet, I'm thinkin'," averred Barney. "Yez don't want to be too sure av ever getting there."

Quite a send-off was given the party from Cape Town.

The governor of the colony caused a salute to be fired from the fort, and the war ships in the harbor did the same.

Not to be outdone at this sort of thing, Frank dropped a bomb into the waters of the harbor. The spectacle was a brilliant one, the explosion causing a pyramid of water fully one hundred feet high.

Then the air-ship sped away to the southwest, and soon Cape Town and the African continent had sunk below the horizon.

Straight for Kerguelen Frank set his course.

The rough waters of the South Atlantic lay in a mighty expanse as far as the eye could reach. Indeed, the position of the aerial voyagers was one worthy of thought.

They were aboard a frail, yet wonderfully compact and elastic machine, far above the surface of the sea. All depended upon the faithfulness of those delicately adjusted parts of machinery.

Should an accident happen, should the wings fail to operate with nicety, or any part of the electrical machinery break, what would be their fate?

Dashed to a most fearful death, either upon land or water. In the latter case it would seem like certain death.

Their lives seemed to be depending upon a hair, and yet if this hair was sufficient, it was as good as a cable, certainly.

But Frank Reade, Jr., the cool and skillful inventor, had counted all these possibilities. There was nothing for which provision had not been made.

Every part of the wonderful mechanism of the air-ship had been constructed with a view to four times the strain upon it that it would be actually called to bear.

If one of the propellers broke another would take its place. The wings were so constructed that they might form a parachute and thus temper a sudden descent.

Every little spot in the machinery was critically examined by the young inventor every day.

If there was the slightest danger of a part failing, it was quickly removed and replaced by perfect work.

Thus accidents were guarded against.

And too great care could not be exercised when it was considered that the Sky Scraper now had before it a flight of thousands of miles over water and a land where to be cast away would mean utter isolation and death. Truly the course of the Sky Scraper now was beset with greater perils than any hitherto made.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON BLEAK KERGUELEN.

KERGUELEN Island lies exactly upon the fiftieth parallel of south latitude. Below it to the South Pole, is a vast unbroken sea.

This is described by mariners as a tempestuous rough ocean, and safe only for ships of the stanchest build. Many a craft has succumbed to the fearful force of the heavy waves, the water even seeming to have greater specific weight.

Our aerial voyagers, however, were not compelled to take any of these points or facts into consideration.

They were beyond the influence of the waves, and had nothing to fear from them so long as the Sky Scraper kept aloft.

But there was occasional vessels sighted, and it was noticed that they did not seem to hold up as well before the wind as in the less boisterous waters further north.

Days passed, and still the Sky Scraper kept on its southward flight.

The vast expanse of water covered an immense distance, and seemed actually limitless.

However, routine on board the air-ship was not as dull as might be imagined. There was always something in the lines of interest or duty to claim one's time.

But at length a distant dark line became visible upon the horizon. It was sighted and reported by Frank Reade, Jr., to be Kerguelen Island.

All were now upon the *qui vive*.

It was the first land sighted in a number of days, and naturally all were interested. The Sky Scraper headed for it.

Soon the rocky, inhospitable shores of the Island of Desolation, as it is sometimes called, loomed up near at hand.

The Sky Scraper descended gradually. It was Frank's intention to make a brief landing upon the island.

This was for the purpose of inspecting the machinery of the air-ship and also of doing some repairs to the wings.

The waves beat mountain high upon the rocks of the desolate island, and our voyagers felt little encouraged as the scene lay before them.

"Gracious me!" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, in amazement, "I have heard it said that Kerguelen was a desolate spot, but I had no idea it was like this."

"Rather cheerless," agreed Frank; "yet it will do for a landing spot."

"Bejabers, I'd never want a farm on that land!" cried Barney.

"I don't think you would," laughed Frank. "It will hardly support anything of that kind."

"Phwhats that, sor? Won't anything grow here at all, sor?"

"I am afraid not," replied Dr. Vaneyke. "Only moss and a few larches; that is all. I believe there is not a foot of arable land on the island—is there, Frank?"

"Not a foot," replied Frank. "It is only one vast formation of rock."

This was true. Kerguelen Land is probably the most desolate of spots on the earth's surface. Woe to the sailor who might chance to be cast away upon it.

But fortunately it was so far out of the beaten tracks of steamers or sailing vessels that such a contingency was hardly likely.

The island is one hundred miles long by fifty broad. It lies in the Antarctic Ocean in latitude 49 deg. 54 min. south, longitude 70 deg. 12 min. east.

The Sky Scraper descended in a convenient place, resting upon some mossy rocks.

Then the aerial voyagers scrambled out onto terra firma. Right glad they were of the chance to stretch their legs.

The Sky Scraper was securely anchored and first a short trip of exploration was taken into the island. Nobody remained with the air-ship for there was no danger of an attack from any foe, for doubtless they were the sole inhabitants of the isle.

Dr. Vaneyke was in his element. He discovered various strange forms of plant life, among them being the wonderful Kerguelen Land cabbage or antiscorbutic plant.

This is famous as being one of the best remedies for scurvy known. A peculiar yellowish oil is pressed from its leaves and then boiled with the food.

Deep into the island the voyages penetrated. But it was plain to be seen that there were not existant upon the island any of the necessary products for sustaining life.

To be cast away upon Kerguelen would certainly be a very serious matter.

But that such had been the case our explorers were soon to discover.

Suddenly Barney came upon a startling spectacle. A great cry escaped his lips and all the others rushed to his side.

"Begorra wud yez luk at the loikes av this," he cried. "Shure it is something dreadful."

In a moment the others were by his side. Certainly it was an astounding sight which they beheld.

There at the base of a huge moss covered rock was a human skeleton. The few shreds of clothing yet partly shielded the remains.

Beside the skeleton was a gun stock and a rusty dagger. But against the rock leaned a slab of soft slate.

And upon this there was scatched evidently with the point of the dagger, a sad explanation of the scene.

Frank read it as follows:

"Cast away on this cursed continent the 19th of March, 1842. Dying of exposure and fever. May God have mercy on my soul! Sole survivor of the wreck of the Vesta, whaler. Whose eye this meets, pity the writer and pray for him.

Signed: MATT KIVEN,
"Mate of the Vesta, whaling vessel from Melbourne, 1842.

"Poor fellow," exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke, "that was certainly a hard fate."

"Ah, he is but one of many who have lost their lives in distant climes," said Frank. "When a man begins to knock about the world then he is exposed to many dangers."

"Begorra, how iver can wan stay at home all the toime!" cried Barney.

"Well, that would be difficult for you, Barney!" cried Frank, laughingly.

"I don't fink it would, Marse Frank!" said Pomp, with a grin. "Dis chile hab a little leaning hisself dat way."

"Well, we are fortunate in that fact!" said

Frank. "Were it not for man's love of roving and exploration, many of the great wonders of the earth would be to-day undiscovered!"

"Which is true enough!" agreed Dr. Vaneyke. "But I say, there is enough soft soil here. Let us give this fellow a Christian burial!"

This was done, and the slab of slate placed at the head of the grave. Then the party started to return to the air-ship.

But they had just come out of a little rocky depression, and got a good view of the sea, when an astonishing and startling thing was seen.

Just off shore there rode at anchor a strange-looking vessel, with lateen sails. It was a Malay pirate, as the black flag at the masthead attested.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Frank, in amazement.

"What does that mean?"

"It is a Malay pirate!" gasped Vaneyke.

"But where did she come from? I'll swear there was not a vessel in sight when we landed here!"

"I remember seeing a sail upon the horizon when we descended!" said Dr. Vaneyke. "No doubt it was her and she has followed us all the way!"

"Begorra, wud yez luk at the crew of them!" cried Barney.

Then all gave a cry of alarm.

From the shore there had suddenly come into view a score of dark-skinned, savage-looking Malays. They were brandishing sharp creeses and had started for the air-ship.

There was no time to lose.

"Quick!" shouted Frank. "If we don't get there first we are lost!"

Unfortunately none of the aerial party had taken weapons. So sure had they been of the safety of their position and immunity from foes that they had not taken this precaution.

It was certain that the Malays meant to capture the air-ship if they could. All depended upon reaching it first.

It was a fearful and critical moment. Frank Reade, Jr., led the way, and the four voyagers made every effort to reach the air-ship first.

CHAPTER XXX.

HO! FOR THE SOUTH POLE.

A FEW moments more of delay would have been fatal to the aerial voyagers. By the best of luck they had been apprised of the danger just in time.

With all speed they now fled toward the Sky Scraper. The Malays were not fifty yards distant when Frank reached the rail.

He was on board in an instant. Quick as a flash he ran to the electric gun. It was but a moment's work to train it upon the foe.

Frank had no desire to kill any of them. His sole purpose was to hold them in check until the anchors could be brought in.

So he aimed the projectile to strike a leviathan boulder just in front of them.

Then he sighted the needle-gun and pressed the electric key. There was the next moment a most terrific explosion.

With a flash like that of the lightning, the electric bolt struck the ledge. In an instant the air was full of flying fragments of rock.

The Malays fell upon their faces with the force of the shock. The electric bolt had done its work well. They were held in confusion and check for a few moments.

This enabled Barney and Pomp to haul in the anchors. The Sky Scraper sprang upward. In a second she was beyond the reach of the Malays. Up she went for a thousand feet, before a startling fact was discovered.

In the run to the air-ship, Frank and Barney and Pomp had outstripped Dr. Vaneyke.

The aged scientist had almost reached the air-ship when he stumbled and fell. His fellow voyagers had fancied him safe aboard the air-ship.

When the doctor picked himself up, the Sky Scraper was high in the air. The situation was for him a desperate one.

When the Sky Scraper reached the altitude of one thousand feet, Frank set the lever and held it suspended. Then all rushed to the rail.

The sight which met their gaze so far below was an astounding one.

"Massy sakes!" screamed Pomp, "who ebber am dat? Ain't dat Marse Vaneyke down dar?"

"The docther!" gasped Barney.

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated Frank, "he did not succeed in getting aboard."

"Shure, sor," cried Barney, "howiver did we overlook him?"

"I can't understand it!" exclaimed Frank. "But we must go back after him or he will be killed!"

Indeed, the position of the doctor could readily be seen to be a desperate one. Already the Malays had started for him.

Dr. Vaneyke, however, was not a coward. He realized fully the exigencies of his position.

He knew that if the Malays captured him his fate was sealed. There was no alternative but to seek safety in flight.

He did not fear being left behind by his companions. He knew full well that they would return for him.

So he started to hastily retreat into the interior of the island. But the pirates had already seen him and started in pursuit.

It now became an exciting chase. Frank Reade, Jr., had at once caused the Sky Scrapper to descend.

He did not dare to throw out any bomb or even to fire, for the Malays were close upon the scientist, and the latter stood the chance of being killed as well.

Dr. Vaneyke was far from being as fleet of foot as the Malays. They easily overtook him in a race of a few hundred yards.

The doctor paused exhausted and realized the futility of further attempt at escape. He turned prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

He drew aim with his rifle at the first Malay and fired. His foot, however, slipping upon the mossy rock, the aim was distracted and the ball went wild.

The next moment the Malays were upon him. What followed was to the aged scientist afterward like a dream.

He parried the blow of the first Malay's cutlass. Then he slipped and fell. It was his salvation.

No sooner had he touched the ground than a heavy form fell across him. It was a Malay with a bullet through his heart.

Barney had fired it just in the nick of time. The next moment the Sky Scrapper shot down into the midst of the pirate crew.

The rifles of the voyagers were blazing right and left, and the savage crew fell back. When Dr. Vaneyke scrambled to his feet he was seized by the collar by Barney and Pomp, and then drawn over the rail.

The aged scientist's life was saved just in the nick of time. As he stood once more safely on the Sky Scrapper's deck he turned and fairly embraced Barney and Pomp.

Frank sent the Sky Scrapper aloft once more. When a thousand feet in the air again he held it in suspension.

Looking over the rail it was seen that the Malays were making their way back to their ship.

"Begorra, I'm thinkin' they got a bit the worst av that fought!" cried Barney, "bad cessa to the loikes av thim."

"You are right," rejoined Frank, "and I don't suppose it would be any crime to annihilate the whole crew of them."

"They are a set of murderers," cried Dr. Vaneyke, "there can be no harm in putting them out of the way. It is only justice."

"I'll blow up their ship anyway," decided Frank. "That will give them a chance to try a bit of Crusoe life on Kerguelen."

The others all clapped their hands in approval of this scheme. So Frank let the Sky Scrapper descend until he could get a good line on the pirate ship with the needle gun.

Then he pulled the lever.

The electric bolt struck the pirate ship about amidships. A tremendous hole was tore in the hull and she began at once to sink.

The effect upon the pirate crew was most thrilling.

Instantly they leaped overboard and started to swim to the shore. Those on shore were fearfully excited. Frank could have destroyed the whole of them easily, but he did not care to do this.

The crew of the Sky Scrapper cheered. Then the air-ship shot up into the air. For several hours it hung over the island while Frank examined the machinery.

But the young inventor happily found that this did not need repairing and that there was no necessity of landing again.

This was fortunate, for to have made another landing on the island would certainly have been to court another encounter with the Malays.

So the Sky Scrapper's course was now set for the South Pole.

"Our next point will be Enderby Land," cried Frank, "that is on the Antarctic Circle. We will then be in frozen latitudes once more."

Every hour now the air grew more and more biting. Frost began to cover the metal work of the air-ship.

The voyagers for a time were comfortable in heavy overcoats. Then on the second day, they once more donned their Arctic fur suits.

The cabin of the Sky Scrapper was closed, and the electric heating apparatus turned on. Soon all was as snug as could be desired.

Icebergs were encountered in great profusion. Then one morning a distant long line of white lay against the horizon.

"It is Enderby Land!" declared Frank. "It is one hundred miles distant."

"Golly!" ejaculated Pomp. "It don't look to be no mo' dan ten miles!"

"That is owing to the extreme rarity of the atmosphere," said Frank.

But before he could say more, a startled cry came from Barney.

"Ship ahoy!" he yelled. "Bejabers, it's med all out av ice!"

Indeed it seemed as if Barney's expression was the correct one. There was drifting some two miles distant, an immense field of ice, and there, right in the center of it was a ship, hull, masts, rigging and all, apparently done in ice.

But Frank Reade, Jr., knew that it was more than the semblance of a ship, that it was, in fact, a stern reality.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ICE BOUND.

THE seeming ice ship was nothing more nor less than a reality. It was a drifting wreck, and its black hull and the color of its rigging was concealed by the coating of ice upon it.

Frank realized this at once, and he cried:

"I tell you, friends, that is a real ship!"

"It cannot be," said Dr. Vaneyke. "It is a literal piece of ice."

"Bejabers, it luks loike that!" cried Barney; "but wud yez luk. There's a mon aboard av her."

"Golly! he am jes' waving a flag!" cried Pomp.

This was true enough.

A man had suddenly appeared at the rail of the ice-clad ship and was waving a white flag.

This at once decided Frank Reade in his action.

He sprang to the pilot-house and at once turned the Sky Scrapper in the direction of the ice floe.

The Sky Scrapper rapidly drew nearer to the ship. Then she settled down like a huge bird and rested upon the ice field.

It was seen that the ship was literally frozen into the ice and could not be easily extricated. Yet to all outward appearance she was yet stanch and uninjured.

Probably she had got caught in the cold waters a previous season, perhaps while whaling and not sufficient thaw had occurred to enable her to escape.

The man at the rail was clad all in furs. Our adventurers noted now that smoke came from the ship's galley pipes.

And as the air-ship settled down other men came out of the cabin. Perhaps a dozen in all there were.

The ice floe was perfectly stable and Frank and Barney prepared to cross over and board the ship.

But a hail came:

"Ahoy there!"

"Ahoy!" replied Frank, heartily.

"What manner of craft have you there that can sail in the air?"

"It is a product of Yankee ingenuity," cried Frank; "this is the Sky Scrapper air-ship from Readstown, U. S. A. What ship are you?"

"The Pearl, Captain Brazer, from New Bedford, Mass., in search of whales."

"We are coming aboard!"

"All right."

"Are you in distress?"

"Yes."

This was enough. Frank did not wait to ask what the trouble might be, but said to Barney: "Come! let us be off!"

The Celt needed no second bidding. He was quickly ready and the two men went over the rail.

They quickly crossed the intervening distance to the frozen ship. Then they clambered over the rail and stood on deck.

The crew came forward to meet them. Sturdy, honest-looking fellows they were. The spokesman said:

"Glad to meet you, gentlemen. I am Edgar Hartley, mate of this vessel."

"And I am Frank Reade, Jr.," said Frank.

"Where is your captain?"

"Ah!" replied the mate, with quivering voice, "that is our distress!"

"Dead?"

"No, worse than that. He is lost somewhere on that cursed Antarctic continent with his charming daughter Violet and two of our best men."

Frank was deeply impressed with this declaration. Then Mate Hartley went on to tell his story.

"We had been two months in these seas," he declared. "And had experienced very fair luck, when a norther, or at least what we would call a norther in our part of the world, set in."

"It blowed a hurricane for two weeks. The seas were so high that we could make little or no headway against them."

"Gradually we were blown to the southward, until we found ourselves locked in pack ice. A fearful freeze came, and here we have been for nine months immovable. It is very evident that we are drifting now. Probably the ice has broken away from the mainland where it was anchored."

"That is doubtless it," agreed Frank. "But what of your captain?"

"Ah, he went ashore with two of our seamen. His daughter Violet went with him. We have never seen or heard of them since!"

"That is strange!"

"Indeed it is."

"But you have some theory as to their fate?"

"Yes. We believe that they became lost among the icebergs, or the frozen valley of that fearful country. We made a wide and ineffectual search for them."

"And could you find no trace of them?"

"Only their footprints, which we followed southward for a mile or more. Then a heavy snow-storm obliterated them!"

Frank was thoughtful for some moments.

Finally he said:

"Are you well stocked with provisions?"

"Enough for twelve months yet."

"Oh, then you are all right!"

"Then you believe that we shall get free from this terrible imprisonment of ice?"

"Certainly, as soon as you get into warmer waters. You are drifting northward, and the further you go the less will be the size of this huge field of ice. When once a berg breaks away it is as certain to drift into warmer waters toward the equator, as the needle is to follow its pole."

"Thank God for that!"

"Do you believe your ship to be intact?"

"I do not believe a timber is started in her. She is sound as a dollar!"

"That is good. I see nothing for you to fear. I should certainly never borrow trouble."

"But our captain?" said Hartley, with agitation. "My God! it is too awful to think of leaving him down here!"

"But he has probably fallen a victim to the rigors of the climate, as well as his companions," said Frank.

"I do not know that. And while I have that haunting doubt, I cannot bear to think of leaving the Antarctic!"

"I can understand how you feel," said Frank, and then with sudden inspiration: "but wait. I have an idea!"

"Ah! what is it?"

Frank waved his hand toward the air-ship and said:

"There is the means to learn whether or not your captain is alive. I can explore half the continent with my air-ship in a few days."

A wild cry of joy and hope escaped Edgar Hartley's lips. He clutched Frank's arm eagerly.

"Oh, God be praised!" he cried. "Will you do that? Oh, if you could only find them! Let me tell you," he said, lowering his voice, "Violet and I were to be married upon returning to New Bedford. You understand. I will give my life to find her safe and sound!"

Frank was really much impressed with what the young mate said. His sympathy was aroused not once and he was resolved to do all he could to assist him.

A dozen different plans revolved through his mind. He grasped Hartley's hand and said:

"I will first release your ship from this ice floe. Then we will look for the missing people."

"Release us?" exclaimed Hartley, in amazement. "How do you expect to do that?"

"You shall see!" said Frank, resolutely.

The young inventor went back to the Sky Scraper with that. Barney and Pomp were at once put to work.

For fully half a mile ahead, to where the edge of the ice field met the lapping waves of the sea, holes were drilled in the ice to the depth of two feet and then some dynamite cartridges placed in them.

The holes were ten feet apart and when the job was done a wire ran from each dynamite torpedo to the deck of the Sky Scraper.

Then Frank caused the air-ship to ascend a hundred feet. Those on board the whaling ship watched with deepest interest to see what would be the result of all this curious preparation.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN QUEST OF THE MISSING.

FRANK'S purpose was simply to split the ice field in two on a direct line with the bow of the Pearl.

This would set the vessel down into the water once more. It would not be a difficult thing then to melt the ice on masts, sails and rigging with live wires and put the vessel into shape again to be worked.

Barney and Pomp and Dr. Vaneyke understood thoroughly what Frank was about to do.

But the crew of the whaling ship did not understand how ice ten feet thick was going to be broken up enough to enable the Pearl to sail out into the open sea.

Frank knew that ice like granite of the most solid kind could be wedged and split on the grain. This was what he expected to do.

Of course, there was no little work about it.

But finally the last hole was drilled, the final cartridge placed and then Barney and Pomp went aboard the air-ship.

Frank caused the Sky Scraper to mount upward for about one hundred feet. Then he pressed an electric button.

The current shot through the wire to the line of cartridges. Instantly the explosion occurred.

It was like the rumble of a mighty earthquake. There were no flying particles of ice in the air, but the ice field simply divided, as if cut with a knife.

There was a wide strait, extending half a mile to the open sea. So nicely had Frank calculated that it met the very keel of the frozen ship and cleared it of the ice wedge upon either side.

The Pearl dropped into the water with a mighty splash and rocked in the open strait, a free ship.

The next thing was to get her out of the strait into the open sea.

The crew cheered lustily at the success of Frank's scheme. Then the young inventor went down to the deck of the Pearl once more.

He caused a cable to be attached to the bow of the ship, and the Sky Scraper gently towed her out of the strait. It was something of a strain for the light air-ship, but she did it by degrees.

The next thing was to clear the rigging of the ice which enchaind it. Frank caused small wires to be twined about the ropes and masts and laid over the sails and blocks.

A current sufficient to melt the ice was employed, and soon great clouds of steam arose in the air. Piece by piece the ice melted and dropped off.

In a few hours the crew were busy polishing the spars and tarring the ropes. The sails were unbent, and general activity reigned on board the Pearl.

The ship was now manageable and able to stand before the wind. When all this had been done Mate Hartley, by Frank's request, went aboard the Sky Scraper.

Then the air-ship set out for Enderby Land one hundred miles distant.

The Pearl was to cruise about the vicinity until the return. The purpose of the expedition was to rescue Captain Bracer and his companions if possible.

It was not known that they were alive, but hope was clung to.

Hartley was the only one of the Pearl's crew to go aboard the Sky Scraper.

He was deeply impressed with the novelty of sailing in the air, and expressed his approval in many ways. The Sky Scraper made a swift flight of that hundred miles.

Soon Enderby Land lay revealed below them. Truly it was a wild and desolate scene.

The voyagers had seen nothing in their travels so far to compare with it. Nothing but a mighty waste of ice gorges and snow was visible as far south as the eye could reach.

Certainly such a wretched land could not be inhabited. Yet brute creation found a livelihood there.

Reindeer browsed under the snow upon the frozen lichens, wolves scampered into the cover of vast larch forests, foxes vanished in their burrows, and wild geese, swans and ducks were in plenty.

Hartley directed Frank to the spot where the Pearl had remained so long. But there was no clew there to guide them in the quest.

However, a line was made from the spot into the interior of the Arctic continent.

A close watch was kept of the region below. But there was nothing to be seen so far to warrant a descent.

However, the air-ship kept on, and the sea had been left far out of sight when a great cloud of smoke was seen upon the horizon ahead.

It seemed to wreath itself about a mighty mountain, which it required but a brief survey with a glass to see was really an active volcano. This was at once an object of interest.

"Indeed, that is curious," declared Dr. Vaneyke. "I have never heard mention of a volcano in this locality."

"For the reason that this region very likely has never been explored," said Frank.

"You may be right."

"What better hypothesis could we have? Do you know I have a theory?"

"Eh—what is it?"

"There is an old-time explorer, I think his name is Dodd, who claimed to have discovered a region of volcanoes here and also a warm valley, where internal fires kept the snow and ice away."

"Pshaw, a fable!"

"I admit that Dodd is generally disbelieved. At the same time I really believe that a chain of volcanoes does exist yonder."

Indeed, this declaration of the young inventor seemed well warranted. Smoke was seen to be hovering above a number of the mountain peaks, which here seemed gathered in a cluster.

Also the mighty bergs and snow crevasses seemed to grow singularly scarce, and in places bald-crowned hills showed themselves devoid of snow.

They were certainly approaching a vastly different region. Even the air seemed to feel the influence of the volcanoes.

But the explorers were not to remain long in doubt.

The Sky Scraper sped on swiftly and soon a marvelous sight was spread to view. All gazed upon it with amazement.

Two long mountain chains extended to the southward as far as the eye could reach. Between these was a deep valley.

Partly up the outward slopes of these volcanic mountains the line of snow and ice extended.

But upon the inner sides and through the great valley, there was not a particle of snow. Only green grass and flowering shrubs and Arctic mosses.

It was a wonderful spectacle and one almost beyond belief. For a time our adventurers gazed upon it spell-bound.

Especially was Hartley interested.

"I vow that is a wonderful phenomenon!" he cried. "In all my travels, I have never seen its like."

"It is grand!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, enthusiastically. "What a contribution to science this discovery will be!"

Frank Reade, Jr., was busy looking for a convenient place for descent, for it was his intention to explore the volcanic valley. Barney and Pomp were at their duties.

Down settled the Sky Scraper rapidly. But just as it descended within a few hundred feet of the earth, Hartley gave a wild cry of amazement. Instantly Frank and Dr. Vaneyke were by his side.

"Look!" he cried, excitedly, "the valley is peopled with human beings!"

Astonished, the others saw as well as Hartley that this was true.

From a deep fissure in the mountain side fully a hundred wild, savage looking men swarmed forth. The Sky Scraper had caught their gaze and they were regarding it with evident amazement.

They were literal giants in frame and dressed in the skins of various wild animals. That they were savages of a low order was apparent.

This was the first discovery of a human race peculiar to the region of the Antarctic, and was of no little importance.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RESCUE.

THE Arctic has the Esquimaux as an aborigine. But as yet no sign of a human race had been discovered at the South Pole.

Therefore the revelation now accorded our explorers was truly a wonderful and important one. Dr. Vaneyke was much excited.

"This discovery will make our fame!" he cried. "It is an enlightenment to science. Truly, it is wonderful!"

But a thought had crossed the mind of Mate Hartley. He instantly exclaimed:

"Upon my word, I believe those fellows can tell us of the fate of Captain Bracer and Violet. Perhaps they fell into their hands!"

It was certainly a plausible idea.

"It may be so," agreed Frank. "At least we will endeavor to find out."

Hartley could hardly wait for the Sky Scraper to settle down within speaking distance. Frank very wisely held the air-ship suspended some feet above the heads of the dumfounded natives.

And now it was seen that they were truly of the very lowest order of savages without sufficient intelligence to know either superstition or fear.

They stood gazing upward at the air-ship as if it was some huge bird, and that they at first fancied it to be such was evident, when they suddenly raised their bows and sent a cloud of arrows rattling against the surface of the air-ship.

But Frank leaned over the rail and made pacific gestures. This caused one of them, who appeared to be the leader, to hail Frank in some unintelligible jargon.

The young inventor could not understand it, and made no effort to. He began a system of sign talk.

He persevered in this for some while, but could get nothing out of the natives.

"Confound their thick skulls!" he cried, "I can do nothing with them."

"Look yonder!" cried Hartley. "There are their houses. Why not examine them?"

Frank looked in the direction indicated. He beheld a curious sight.

The mountain wall of rock was literally honeycombed with cavern chambers, after the manner of the ancient cliff dwellers of Mexico.

These were the habitations of the Antarctic natives. Truly, they were a queer tribe.

But even as they looked an astonishing thing happened. Upon a spur of rock far above a slender female figure appeared, and a wild scream came down to the ears of those on board the Sky Scraper.

"My God, it is Violet!" gasped Hartley.

It was truly the daughter of the lost captain of the Pearl. She had seen the air-ship from her cell in the cliff, and escaping, had managed to gain this point of rock.

But her foes were after her even now. Three of the Antarctic savages were scaling the cliff to recapture her.

Hartley was in the wildest state of excitement. He could hardly contain himself.

"Let me out!" he shrieked. "I must save her!"

"Keep cool," admonished Frank. "She shall be saved."

The young inventor sprang into the pilot house and sent the Sky Scraper forward to the very edge of the cliff. As it floated to the verge Hartley at the rail leaned over and clasped the young girl in his arms.

Thus she was safely brought to the deck of the air-ship. Her pursuers, discomfited, gave over the pursuit.

The joy of the two lovers was most intense. Those who witnessed it averted their gaze in a reverent manner.

"Violet says that all of her party are captives in those cliff dwellings," declared Hartley after awhile, approaching Frank. "She thinks we can rescue them without much trouble."

"It shall be done!" cried the young inventor, heartily.

The Antarctic natives had all retired to a safe distance from the mysterious destroyer which had descended upon them from the clouds.

There was no doubt but that they were greatly puzzled, if not impressed with a deadly fear.

Frank saw that it was his time to act. He went to the needle gun and sent a bomb down to the base of the cliff.

It exploded with fearful force. The air was filled with flying stones, turf and debris. The

natives were now thoroughly terrified, and fled.

Those in hiding in the cave dwellings rushed out and took to flight. Suddenly from one of the caves three men rushed out.

At once they were seen to be white men. Hartley recognized them.

"It is Captain Bracer and the two sailors!" he cried, "let me signal them!"

The air-ship at once descended and rested upon the ground. Captain Bracer and his men looked about in a bewildered manner, until they saw the air-ship.

Then the captain recognized Violet and Hartley on the deck. At once they started for the Sky Scrapper.

Some of the Antarctic natives undertook to chase them, but Frank sent a bomb into their midst and they at once fled into the mountains and did not again show themselves.

It could be seen that the rescued men were regarding the Sky Scrapper with wonderment as they ran toward it.

In a few moments they were at the rail. They clambered on deck and their meeting with Violet and Hartley was a joyful one.

Captain Bracer was a bluff, jovial old salt. As he embraced Hartley, he cried:

"Why, lad, we never expected to see ye again. Have ye been hunting for us all this time?"

"I would never have returned without you!" cried the brave young mate, "but I fear that we should never have succeeded in rescuing you, but for this gentleman and his wonderful air-ship."

"Air-ship!" gasped the amazed sea captain. "Blow me! I've sailed many a good ship on the seas, but never in the air."

"That is what this is," said Hartley, with a laugh, "but let me introduce you."

Frank Reade, Jr., Dr. Vaneyke and Barney and Pomp all shook hands with the captain. Then followed much explanatory talk.

The captain explained how they had wandered into the snow valleys and got lost. Finally they had found the volcanic valley just in time to escape being frozen, and had at once been captured by the natives.

What would have been their ultimate fate it was hard to say. Probably they would never have seen civilization again.

"But I kin tell ye, this is a wonderful freak of nature, this valley," declared Captain Bracer. "There's nothing in this country to equal it."

"I agree with you!" cried Frank. "Do you know how far south it extends?"

"I have reason to believe even to the immediate region of the South Pole. It must be that the earth's internal fires approach quite near to the surface, and that is what makes the land so warm and fertile."

"There is no doubt but that is a correct hypothesis," agreed Dr. Vaneyke. "This discovery will astonish the scientific world."

But preparations were made to convey the whaler's crew back to the ship. It was their intention to at once sail for home.

Two years in those solitudes was enough of an experience for all, and home would seem a good place to strike just then. So all looked forward eagerly to rejoining the ship.

The Sky Scrapper made a swift flight back to the coast.

The Pearl was sighted just off shore and clear of the ice pack. At once boats put off, and the rescued party were taken aboard.

Farewells were spoken, and the Pearl spread her sails and stood away, northward bound. The crew of the air-ship watched the vessel get hull down on the horizon, then Frank Reade, Jr., cried cheerily:

"Now, boys, let us go back to the Antarctic valley. I have a powerful desire to explore that wonderful region."

All were eager to do this. Dr. Vaneyke was particularly enthusiastic. All believed that exciting events were in store.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DR. VANEYKE'S HYPOTHESIS.

THE Sky Scrapper made quick time back to the volcanic valley.

This time Frank entered the valley by coasting along the verge of several of the largest craters.

These were of mighty extent and formed a thrilling spectacle vomiting their volume of fire, smoke and boiling lava. Several times the air-ship narrowly escaped being drawn into the vortex of an eruption.

This would have been indeed fatal. The death of all on board would have been a certainty.

Realizing the enormity of the risk incurred, Frank finally abandoned the plan and let the air-ship descend into the valley.

Nothing was seen of the natives.

They were doubtless hiding in the mountains. It was quite useless to endeavor to treat or make friends with them.

So no attempt was made to do this. Frank let the air-ship drift slowly along through the valley.

Close observation of its peculiarities was thus made. Dr. Vaneyke busied himself greatly in this manner.

"The soil is rich in plant food," he declared, "but there is an absence of the plant. Doubtless it would thrive here if brought here. It is certainly a wonderful region."

"Do you think that it could support a nation of people?" asked Frank.

"If its extent is what I think it is, yes," replied the scientist, "but—"

"What?"

"The inhabitants would be constantly living upon the verge and crust of a terrestrial hell. No doubt below us there are internal fires of fearful scope."

"Do you think they will ever break forth?"

"That is a difficult question to answer. Perhaps not for ten thousand years, and yet liable to at any moment. When they do, there will likely be a revolution of the whole earth's surface."

"In what respect?"

"Why, everything about here will sink beneath the falling crust. There will be earthquakes, and the ocean will rush in to flood and fill up the depression. Such a removal of the ocean will lay bare certain parts of the globe now submerged. New continents will arise from the sea, and old ones will be flooded. The Arctic Ocean, as in the Glacial Epoch, will rush down across North America. The North Pole will be transposed to about the vicinity of a belt near Cuba, and the South Pole to the center of India. Where the regions of ice now are in the Arctic and Atlantic, there would be the heat of the equator and tropics."

Frank listened to this hypothesis in amazement.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, "have you any precedent for such an assumption, doctor?"

"The best of precedents. Geology teaches us that the majority of the North American country was under the sea, also many parts of Europe and Asia. At one time no doubt England was connected by land with the continent. Some such depression or internal convulsion as this one I have described as possible, transferred the cities and continent of Atlantis to the bottom of the sea."

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, who had been listening. "I done sink we be like de people in Noah's ark, den. I don't see how anybody but us can be saved, bekase dar's nobody kin fly in de air but us."

"Keep your eyes open Pomp," laughed Frank. "When you hear of an earthquake just get aboard the air-ship in the quickest way. It will be your certain salvation."

"Bejabers, if iverybody else on earth was kilt phwat wud be the use av us few livin'?" cried Barney. "Shure an' I don't belave I'll put meself into trouble an that account."

"Huh! yo' don' want to die no mo' dan anybody else, I ish."

"Phwat's that yez say?"

"I done reckon yo'd kick."

"Begorra that's a part av the disease," cried Barney. "It's a mighty poor death widout a kick."

Everybody laughed and the subject was dropped. Dr. Vaneyke was busy the rest of the day jotting down memoranda of his scientific observations.

The Sky Scrapper kept steadily on through the Antarctic day. Darkness did not come with night, though the sun dipped low into the horizon.

Full forty eight hours the air-ship traversed the warm regions of the Antarctic.

Then at length they were left behind and once more snow and ice were encountered. For several days the Sky Scrapper kept steadily northward having crossed the earth's axis and being now upon the opposite side of the mighty globe.

That transition across the Polar line was something to remember. Probably our aerial voyagers were the only human beings to ever accomplish the feat.

Northward bound!

The thought had a particularly pleasant effect upon the travelers. It meant homeward bound, and not one of them but had a quiet

longing to see old Readestown and America once more.

Days passed and the flight over Graham's Land, and the Polar continent in general was devoid of exciting incident.

Naught was visible so far below but vast wastes of ice and snow. The unvarying monotony was painful to the eye.

So it was with something like a thrill of relief that the party saw the bleak, angry waters of the South Atlantic break into view.

Then the skies became black and stormy. The wind blew a hurricane and for days the Sky Scrapper beat steadily against it.

It seemed as if it would never overcome the terrific resistance, but after a week of hard battling the air-ship got out of the tempestuous clime, and one day a dark, forbidding line of coast was seen to the northwest.

Instantly all were on deck with glasses to study the distant coast.

But it remained for Frank Reade, Jr., to declare what land it was. He carefully took the bearings and then declared:

"It is really Terra del Fuego, the land of fire. Far to the westward is the mighty head of Cape Horn."

All drew a breath of joyful relief.

It was certainly a joyful reflection that at last they were upon their own side of the earth and in sight of an American continent.

The Sky Scrapper now made rapid flight. For fully two weeks her electric engines had been driving constantly and her wings had been beating the air.

Of course the friction and wear was something fearful, and Frank saw that a landing must soon be made and some of the armatures replaced.

So he hailed the appearance of land with something like joy. It was his intention to pass over Terra del Fuego, however, and alight in Patagonia.

"We will then have a hunt on the Pampas," he declared. "Surely that will be something to anticipate."

Barney and Pomp were delighted, as was Dr. Vaneyke. Two weeks in their cramped quarters induced a natural longing to get down upon terra firma for a while.

The flight over Terra del Fuego was most interesting.

It was a wild region, indeed, and it was readily seen why it was called the Land of Fire. Extensive conflagrations were seen everywhere and in places men and animals were fleeing for their lives before the flames.

Then the Straits of Magellan were crossed. Several ships were seen picking their way through.

Then Patagonia loomed up ahead. Before nightfall the Pampas lay below and the South Atlantic Ocean was out of sight.

Frank selected a good place for a descent.

This was in the verge of a vast area of beechwoods. This was the principal wood of Patagonia.

Deep glens, lonely recesses, and babbling brooks were here, all overshadowed by giant beechwoods. While out beyond were the mighty ocean-like expanses of the Pampas. In this likely spot the camp was made.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ATTACKED BY GIANTS.

A MORE delightful spot for a camp could hardly be imagined.

Wood was in plenty, and soon Pomp had a big fire going. Barney went into the woods and brought back a brace of pheasants and several rabbits.

Pomp prepared these with his inimitable skill and they were served. All ate with great relish.

There were a few hours yet left before dark, and the party determined to do a little exploring.

The beechwood glens looked enticing, and Dr. Vaneyke, Frank and Barney took their rifles and set forth. Pomp was left in charge of the Sky Scrapper.

For some ways the hunters kept on. Then a flock of pheasants arose from a copse.

A shot brought down two. More were started and then the party came to a silvery stream overhung with mighty trees.

A little spring gushed forth from the earth. Barney flung himself down to drink out of it when he gave a startled cry.

"Bejabers, phwat's that?" he gasped.

In an instant the others were by his side.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank, sharply.

"Wud yez luk fer yersilf," said the Celt, arising. "Shure, an' it's a big white eye lukin' up at me out av the wather."

"A white eye?"

"Yis, sor."

"Pshaw!"

Frank and Dr. Vaneyke laughed at the excited Celt. But Frank, seeing his earnestness, knelt down over the spring.

The water was as clear as crystal. It bubbled up through a bed of clean white sand.

And there, imbedded in the sand, was what Barney had declared to be the great white eye. Frank thrust his hand down into the spring and brought it up.

There it lay, the size of a pigeon's egg, in his hand.

All the fires of true light blazed from the stone. Simultaneously all gasped:

"A diamond!"

Such it was, and a veritable rival of the Kohinoor. For some moments not one of the trio could speak.

Then Frank turned the stone over slowly in his hand. It needed not the glance of the expert to determine the true water of the blue white stone.

"Barney, it is yours," said Frank. "You are a wealthy man. This will make your fortune."

The Celt was too excited to get his tongue straightened out into plain English. Only unintelligible brogue rolled from his lips.

But the trio were not given much time to discuss the merits of the rich find.

Just as Frank passed the diamond to Barney a mighty cry came from the depths of the beechwoods.

Instantly all turned and were amazed at the spectacle which they beheld.

From the depths of the forest a score of giant forms had appeared and were rushing toward them. Herculean savages they were, clad in skins and carrying huge war clubs.

Frank Reade, Jr., recognized their character at once.

He knew that they were specimens of the famous race of Patagonian giants, savage fellows and well to be dreaded. For a moment our friends were stupefied.

Then Frank Reade Jr. recovered himself and shouted:

"For your lives? Back to the air-ship. Follow me!"

A shower of war clubs came flying after the fleeing white men. With long strides and savage yells the giants came on in pursuit.

Down through the glen went pursued and pursuers. Dr. Vaneyke on account of his age could not run as fast as Frank and Barney.

He faltered and lost ground.

Seeing this Frank cried:

"Run on, doctor. Get to the air-ship as quickly as possible and Barney and I will hold them in check."

A word to Barney was sufficient. The Celt fell in behind a beechwood and opened fire on the giants.

Frank did the same. Several of the foe were thus quickly brought down. This drove the others to cover.

They sought shelter behind the beechwoods. But their woodcraft was of a surperior nature and soon Barney and Frank became conscious of the fact that they were likely to be surrounded.

This necessitated falling back. With the beechwoods for cover they did this slowly.

Their rifles gave them the advantage of the giants, for they could pick a man and drop him every time. The primitive weapons of the savages were only effectual in close combat.

But by this time Dr. Vaneyke had nearly reached the Sky Scraper. As a signal he fired his rifle.

"Come on, Barney!" shouted Frank.

Both dashed away at full speed. At that instant, from a thicket just ahead, two huge giants burst forth. One hurled a battle ax, which just escaped Barney's head.

Frank instantly brought the savage down with his revolver. The other fell beneath Barney's deadly aim. Then on rushed the two men.

Now the air-ship was in sight. The giants had broken cover and were close behind.

Another hundred yards and Frank and Barney would have been overtaken. But Pomp now took a hand in the affair.

The darky opened fire from the deck of the air-ship, and so did Dr. Vaneyke. This for a moment checked the savages.

On board tumbled Frank and Barney. There was no alternative but to break camp and make an ascent. The giants hovered among

the beechwoods, and with the cover of darkness would no doubt make an attack.

The sun was just setting in the west. There is no twilight in Patagonia. Soon all would be darkness.

Knowing this Frank did not linger in the vicinity. The Sky Scraper was sent upward, and made a course some miles to the northward.

Even here it was not deemed safe to descend. So the anchors were thrown out and the air-ship held in suspension.

And here at her anchor, the air-ship rocked. Barney watched the first half of the night.

Then came Pomp's turn. All the others were asleep below decks. The darky had not been on guard long before some curious things happened.

He sat near the rail and was watching the Southern Cross, a constellation visible in those latitudes.

The stars seemed suddenly to be gently gliding upward. Then the horizon suddenly came on a line with Pomp's vision.

Even then an explanation of the phenomenon might not have occurred to the darky had it not been for a sudden perceptible jarring of the air-ship.

Then he sprang to his feet in a startled manner and saw that the air-ship was almost on a level with the pampas.

Astonished he sprang to the search-light and pressed the key.

A flood of light lit up the vicinity. Pomp saw that the air-ship was not twenty feet from the earth and below upon the plain were a score or more of the giants.

They were pulling at the anchor rope and had nearly dragged the air-ship down to the ground.

A yell of terror pealed from Pomp's lips.

"Marse Frank, come quick, fo' yo' life. De debbils hab cum fo' us!"

At the same moment Pomp pressed the electric alarm. It began ringing furiously.

The giants seeing that they were discovered, broke the air with a chorus of savage yells. They gave way at the rope and down came the air-ship to the earth.

Then a dozen of them piled over the rail and upon the deck. It was certainly a most critical moment.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ACROSS THE TABLE LANDS.

POMP had retreated into the pilot-house. He had presence of mind enough to press the electric valve which closed and locked every entrance on board.

But the Patagonian giants made a mistake in their attack upon the Sky Scraper.

Having pulled it down to the earth, they had evidently believed that it would stay there without being secured.

Some of them scrambled over the rail. A part of those dragging on the anchor rope let go. The result was astounding.

The air-ship, relieved of the strain upon it, instantly vaulted upward again. In doing so it took up those who yet clung to the rope full a hundred feet into the air, also those on the deck.

Moreover, so great was the impetus upward that the anchor rope was snapped like thread. Up shot the air-ship a thousand feet into the air.

And hanging to the broken anchor rope below were half a dozen terrified giants. Those on the deck rushed to the rail and two of them actually leaped over, to go down to an awful death.

Pomp was quick-witted enough to see the situation at a glance. The darky made quick and instant action.

He checked the upward flight of the air-ship and held it in suspension, else it might have gone upward indefinitely.

By this time every one of the aerial voyagers were aroused. They, finding the cabin door locked, came piling into the pilot house.

"What on earth is the matter, Pomp?" cried Frank.

"Yo' kin see fo' yo'sef, sah," replied the darky, pointing to the deck.

Frank looked and was astounded to see the giants by the rail.

"How did they get there?" he gasped.

"Dey jes' pulled de air-ship down to de ground by de anchor ropes," replied Pomp.

"Where were you all the time? Were you asleep at your post?"

"Fo' de good Lor', Marse Frank, ob co'se I warn't! It was jes' done so easy like dat I

didn't know anything about it until I was nigh de ground, sah!"

"Mercy on us!" cried Dr. Vaneyke. "We came near being all butchered in our beds!"

Barney made no comment. He knew that Pomp felt bad enough about the affair. Frank saw how the thing had happened and was disposed to exonerate Pomp.

But he cried:

"We must do something with those fellows. I don't want to kill them!"

The giants in terror were hanging over the rail and looking wistfully down at the earth. Their fear was most abject and they seemed meditating the awful leap.

Frank saw he had nothing to fear and boldly opening the pilot-house door, went out.

The glare of the search-light made all on the deck as plain as day. He walked boldly up to the giants and addressed them in several languages.

They cowered before him. One of them was discovered to understand a smattering of Spanish.

This was fortunate, and Frank made them understand, that they would not be injured but safely returned to the earth, if they would only agree to never disturb the air-ship again.

The savages were only too glad to accept these terms.

Then Frank discovered that a number of them were clinging to the anchor rope. He shouted to Pomp to lower the air-ship quickly.

But before the Sky Scraper reached the earth two more of the giants fell off and were dashed to pieces.

It was a fearful lesson to them, and they hastily scrambled from the deck, and joining their comrades when the air-ship alighted, they vanished in the night.

The episode had been an exciting one, and for some time it furnished food for discussion.

But finally Pomp said:

"Wha' am yo' gwine to do now, Marse Frank? Shall we fin' anoder camping place?"

"No; we will stay right here," replied the young inventor. "Go out there and find the anchor and put out a new rope."

"But am'n't youse afraid ob de rapsallions comin' back, sah?"

"Not a bit of it," declared Frank. "They won't trouble us again. Besides, you must keep better watch."

Pomp said no more. The anchor connection was made, and then all retired to rest again. Nothing more of interest occurred that night.

The next half day was occupied in repairing the machinery. Then the flight was taken up again.

For days the air-ship sailed on over the wild-est country our voyagers had ever seen.

Patagonia had been left behind and the rolling plains and table lands of the Argentine came into view.

And now our voyagers could realize in full what a vast territory in this part of the world yet remained a wilderness and unsettled.

As far as the eye could reach for many hours the air-ship floated above a waste of country utterly devoid of human settlement.

There were plenty of wild beasts, and of all descriptions.

But the hand of man had not as yet made itself felt in these solitudes. Indeed, without doubt much of the region was totally unexplored.

For days the Sky Scraper drifted northward.

Frank made no attempt at a descent, as the nights were almost akin to the days, being moonlit and bright.

The air was rich and balmy, and this part of the trip the travelers enjoyed more than any. Nights of the most placid and beatiful description were the order.

To sit by the air-ship's rail in the evening and while away the hours in social conversation in songs and musical selections, while the ship floated above mighty mountain peaks, down through valleys and over brilliantly-lighted cities and towns, was a treat for the gods.

Argentina was crossed in this manner, and then Paraguay. Then one day Frank took the bearings, and declared:

"We are high over Brazil. A wonderful country is now before us. We are entering upon the great Table-lands, and in another week we shall reach the Selvas of the Amazon."

"And there, I beg the privilege of a descent!" cried Dr. Vaneyke, eagerly. "I would like to pursue some research in those mighty forests."

"You shall have your wish," replied Frank.

So all now looked forward eagerly to the day

when the Selvas of the mighty Amazon should be reached.

To describe the wonders of the mighty table-lands over which they now passed, would require volumes.

We will not attempt it here, but carry the reader on to the famous Selvas, where our adventurers were destined to experience some most thrilling adventures.

One day the broad table lands began to merge into forests.

And such forests! Nothing in the world is to be compared to the Selvas of the Amazon. Few the white men who have traversed them in their entirety.

To-day, in spite of years of exploration and research, there are mighty portions of this vast wilderness unexplored. Races of men live there, unlike any other. Beasts and serpents, birds and saurians of different species from any in any other part of the world.

Into this mighty wilderness the voyagers now made their way.

Frank was true to his promise to make a descent here. Dr. Vaneyke was on edge with anticipation and excitement.

Barney and Pomp got their hunting outfits ready, for they knew that there was sport in store for them.

So there was, and some exciting adventures, the like of which they had never before experienced in any land.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE SELVAS.

It was at first a difficult matter to find a safe and fit landing place for the Sky Scraper.

The woods were so exceedingly thick and matted with vegetation that a clearing was not a common thing.

But finally the explorers found a break in the forest just where two small rivers met and became tributary to the Amazon.

It was barely large enough to afford a landing place for the Sky Scraper.

But that it was so was quite enough. The air-ship descended, and rested upon a little mound of sand not fifty yards from the banks of the river.

The anchors were thrown out, and the position of the air-ship made secure.

When this had been accomplished, our adventurers began to look about them. And the scene which now fell upon their gaze was certainly a wonderful one.

Above their heads to the height of fully one hundred and twenty feet or more rose the tree tops.

The trees were literal giants of their species.

There were the wide spreading palm, the luxuriant tree fern, the massive mahogany, and dyewood, the caoutchouc, or rubber tree, and the bombox, or wool tree.

And through all their branches densely and luxuriantly crept all manner of clinging and trailing vines.

Indeed, the foliage was something magnificent, and our adventurers gazed upon it spell bound.

"This is the treat of my life!" declared Dr. Vaneyke. "There are men in my profession to-day who would give a fortune to be here!"

"Then you are a lucky man!" laughed Frank. "I will admit that!"

But Barney and Pomp were hastily preparing for a little bit of sport on their own hook.

Frank had given them leave, and they had got out the rubber canoe from the cabin and put it together.

This made a buoyant and safe craft, and they proposed to take a trip up the river for some ways with it.

This seemed the safest and best method of exploration, for the woods were so densely matted with vines as to be practically impenetrable.

Dr. Vaneyke was disposed to confine his research to the vicinity.

"There is enough to occupy me here," he declared.

Frank was busy with some repairs on the machinery of the craft. But he carefully admonished Barney and Pomp not to go far or be gone long.

"Golly, Marse Frank, does yo' s'pose dar am any big snakes out dar in dat ribber? Ain' specially fond ob snakes."

"I believe there may be," replied Frank. "You will need to look out for them."

This was a poser for Pomp.

If there was one thing which he had a horror of it was snakes. But Barney urged him on.

"Begorra, I'll go alone!" he cried. "Divil a coward do I want wid me!"

So Pomp yielded. The canoe was equipped, and they pushed out into the stream.

As they did so a sixteen foot alligator leisurely glided out of some saw grass and blinked at them.

But Barney was at the paddle, and sent the canoe up the sluggish current at a rapid pace.

It was the purpose of the explorers to keep as near the shore as possible. This was in the belief that the huge monsters supposed to infest the river were in its middle.

But this was a great mistake. The alligators and a huge species of water snake were at home in the brakes and saw-grass along the shore.

However, they paddled on for a good while in safety.

No incident of an exciting nature occurred. The scenes about them were of the most wonderful description.

The huge trees bent over the river and in places their tops were connected by veritable bridges of trailing vines.

Across these bridges troops of monkeys went chattering.

Barney and Pomp could easily have shot them had they been so disposed. In the foliage and blending with its rich color harmoniously, were parrots and other gorgeous hued birds.

Once Barney gave a quick start and ceased rowing.

"Wha' am de mattah?" exclaimed Pomp, starting up.

"Begorra, wud yez luk at the loikes av that?"

But Pomp saw the object of Barney's remark at the same moment not fifty yards ahead. A tree trunk had fallen into the water at some time, and upon this was stretched a long yellow form.

It was a jaguar, and the beast's eyes seemed fixed intently upon the water. Its tail was just touching the water.

Suddenly its paw was seen to flash downward, and when it rose there was in its grasp a huge fish. This told the story. The jaguar was fishing.

The fish disappeared down the beast's capacious maw, when, as it saw Barney and Pomp, it turned and flashed out of sight in the forest.

Barney had sprung to his rifle to get a shot at the beast.

But he was too late.

It had vanished in the impenetrable depths. There was nothing but to paddle on.

"Begorra, that's a foine way to catch fish!" averred Barney. "I wouldn't moind that knock meself. I niver had the luck anyway."

"Delas' time yo' an' I went fishin', I'ish, yo' drank up all de bait," said Pomp facetiously.

"Shut up yer head!" said Barney, testily.

"Phwat do yez call that?"

At that moment, from the branches of a huge tree fern, a strange bird, but with the most gorgeous of plumage, flew.

Instantly Pomp threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

It was a neat shot, but Pomp's aim was unerring, and down came the bird fluttering into the water.

"Begorra, that's a dandy!" cried Barney, eagerly. "Shure, thim feathers wull make a foine lady's bonnet."

And he bent to the paddle to recover the bird. But at that moment a huge pair of jaws rose out of the water, and the bird disappeared.

Barney ceased to paddle.

"Mither presarve us!" he gasped. "Shure, thim jaws was large enough to take us in boat an' all."

"Golly, I done flnk yo' bettah not go any fuder, I'ish," said Pomp, with a shiver. "I ain' no Jonah dat wants to be swallowed up, I ain'."

Barney was as much of Pomp's mind as could be on that subject. Just ahead was a place where the foliage hung over the bank, and it looked like a good landing place.

"Phwat do yez say if we go ashore a bit?" asked the Celt.

"I'm jes' agreeable to dat," replied Pomp.

Accordingly Barney sent the canoe up under the overhanging branches.

"Wud yez grab a limb an' hold an?" cried Barney. "Take that wan over yer head."

Pomp at once obeyed. He grabbed a limb overhead which seemed as large as his body.

But the instant he did this he saw a horrible head and basilisk eyes among the foliage and the limb moved.

Heavens! It was not a part of the tree as he

now saw, but the coil of a mighty serpent of the anaconda species.

A terrible yell burst from Pomp's lips. He would have leaped overboard in his fright but it was too late.

Down came the terrible coils, and in an instant wound about him. Up into the foliage he was hauled by irresistible force, and he felt himself being crushed to death by that awful pressure.

It was an awful fate to befall the terrified ducky.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FATE OF THE SKY SCRAPER.

FOR a moment Barney stood paralyzed with horror at the situation. He saw the awful folds encircle Pomp, and knew that death n encased his friend.

Then his wits returned. The Celt was never a coward in time of danger.

He was willing to give his life to save his friend. Quick as a flash he acted.

"Begorra, don't yez give up, naygur! he yelled. "Howld on, an' I'll save yez!"

He saw the terrible head of the boastrictor dancing in the foliage above. Up went the Celt's rifle.

A quick, sure aim.

He was a dead shot. The rifle spoke, and the bullet went true to its mark. The serpent's brains were bespattered among the foliage.

Then the huge coils relaxed, the slippery body began to slide down into the water. Pomp dropped also, and fell just beyond the prow of the canoe.

The ducky went down with a splash. He was not so badly injured but that he could swim.

He instantly struck out. Barney dropped his rifle and went forward to help him into the canoe.

But at that moment a dozen huge heads rose out of the water all around the boat.

Leviathan jaws made a rush for the hopeless negro. A yell of terror escaped Pomp's lips.

It seemed for a moment as if the ducky was indeed doomed. But fortune was on his side.

With a superhuman effort Barney just dragged him into the canoe. The jaws of an alligator barely missed his heels.

Then Barney seized the paddle and sent the canoe flying down the stream. The alligators came swimming behind.

"Bress de Lor!" gasped Pomp. "I done got away from dat snake!"

"Bejabers it was a close call!"

"I owes yo' mah life, I'ish."

"An' yez have owed me a dollar fer over a year!"

"Fo' de Lor! I'se done gwine to pay yo' dat dollar right away!"

Then they laughed. Nothing could dash the jovial spirits of these two comical geniuses.

"Whar am yo' goin' now?" asked Pomp.

"Bejabers, back to the air-ship. Shure I've had enough av this unlucky country."

"I'se wid yo' dar, I'ish."

And back to the air-ship the two explorers, faint-hearted went. Frank and Dr. Vaneyke were surprised.

"What has brought you back so soon?" cried the young inventor in surprise. "I supposed you would be absent all day."

"Bejabers it's moighty lucky yez are to have us back at all, at all!" replied Barney.

Thereupon they detailed their adventures. Frank and the doctor laughed heartily at their comic version of it.

There was no disposition to linger long in the spot where they were. All hands begun to think serious of home, so a few hours later the Sky Scraper arose and the journey was resumed.

The flight over the mighty Selvas occupied a couple of days, and then after crossing the mighty Amazon, they followed the course of the Rio Negro north for a few hundred miles.

Then the course was changed and the Great Plateau of Southern Venezuela was reached.

Next the Orinoco river, and Frank followed this down to its delta.

His course now he decided should be over the Islands of Trinidad, Tobago, Martinique and Guadalupe, so that at no time would the Sky Scraper be long out of sight of land.

Following the Lesser Antilles, the next point would be the Greater Antilles, Porto Rico, Hayti and Cuba.

Thence Frank intended to cross over to Key West, and northward along the Florida coast across the States, home.

He had no intention of making a stop anywhere, for these islands were familiar to all of the travelers.

But fate had ordered it otherwise. All went well until the air-ship hung over the Isle of Cuba.

Dr. Vaneyke had a desire to see the city of Havana from the deck of the air-ship. So Frank sent the Sky Scrapper thither.

It hung over the city at an elevation of a thousand feet. Its appearance in the sky created a sensation in the Spanish town.

Now the majority of Cubans are very superstitious, and ever suspicious of foreigners and their possible designs against the country.

The effect produced by the appearance of the Sky Scrapper can therefore be imagined.

The Governor ordered the troops out from Moro Castle and the whole city was thrown into a state of the wildest disorder.

It was believed that some hostile nation had invented an air-ship and had come to Havana for the purpose of leveling the city to the ground by means of explosives.

The voyagers could see that something was going on down below, but they never suspected the true state of affairs.

As they were watching the scene spread below there came a sudden rending sound from the engine-room.

Then the Sky Scrapper began to rapidly settle. Frank was aetionished.

"Hello, Barney! what are you doing?" There was no reply.

The Celt was below. There was nobody in the pilot-house and the wheel was set.

"We are sinking," cried Dr. Vaneyke. "What does it mean, Frank?"

"I can't imagine."

The young inventor sprung into the engine-room. It required but a glance for him to see the truth.

The great wings of the air-ship were not moving. They were simply acting as a parachute to lower the ship to the earth.

One of the driving rods, a delicate piece of steel, had snapped. This was an unlooked-for and serious calamity.

"My soul!" gasped Frank, "I fear the Sky Scrapper is doomed!"

There was no possible way for the air-ship to be held in suspension longer. The shock of the fall could not kill the voyagers, for the wings acted as a parachute to lower it gently.

Frank rushed out on deck.

"My soul, doctor!" he cried, "the air-ship is going down!"

"Can nothing be done to check it?" cried the doctor.

"Not a thing!"

"Then let us see what we are going to light upon."

Both sprang to the rail.

As they looked over an appalling sight burst upon their vision.

Below them were the waters of the bay.

It was certain that the Sky Scrapper would fall in the middle of the harbor. Also, as she had not been built to float, she would go to the bottom.

Words cannot describe the sensations of the voyagers at that moment. Neither Frank nor the doctor could act for a time.

Then Frank turned a white face to the scientist.

"Doctor, this is the last of the Sky Scrapper. She will never be saved."

"Don't say that."

"It is true."

"What shall we do?"

"We must float, swim or sink. The canoe is our only hope."

There was no time to lose. The Sky Scrapper was settling gradually but surely. Barney and Pomp now came rushing on deck.

There was but little time in which to think or act, or affect dismay. The portable canoe was quickly produced.

And barely had it been procured when the air-ship settled into the water. Over the rail rushed the water, and the voyagers had just

time to throw themselves overboard when she sank. They were nearly drawn into the vortex, but all were good swimmers, and kept up until the canoe could be righted. Then they climbed into it.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SPANISH JUSTICE—THE END.

THE position was a most calamitous one for the voyagers. The transition from the sky to the water had been so sudden and complete as to leave no time for premeditation or even speculation as to chances of escaping death.

However, all were safe for the time in the canoe. But the exciting incidents of the hour had only begun.

As if the total loss of his air-ship were not affliction enough for Frank Reade, Jr., a new calamity presented itself.

Getting out of the whirling vortex made by the sinking air-ship, our adventurers started to paddle the canoe through the dancing waves of the bay.

But as they did so a startled cry went up from Dr. Vaneyke.

"Look out Frank, they'll run us down!"

The young inventor turned his head just in time to see a small steam launch bearing down upon them.

In it were a dozen armed Cubans in military uniform. The commander shouted forcibly:

"Surrender, you dogs, or we'll cut you to pieces!"

"Ahoy!" shouted Frank. "Who are you?"

"You'll find out in due time!" was the surly reply. "Come aboard now and make no trouble."

"That is just what we want to do," replied the young inventor.

The next moment the canoe was alongside the launch and all clambered aboard. A dark, swarthy and fierce-looking Spaniard confronted Frank.

"Are you le capitaine?" he asked, tersely.

"I am the owner of the air-ship," replied Frank.

"Per Dios! An American!" ejaculated the Spanish officer. "So you thought to blow up our city, eh? But your game did not work!"

Frank comprehended the situation at once. He was not only surprised but indignant at the insinuation.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, angrily. "It is nothing of the kind. I have heard of the thick-skinned ignorance of your people down here, and I warn you not to detain us as you have others upon groundless suspicion of trying to blow up your country! It is all rank nonsense!"

But the commander pulled his black mustache and assumed incredulity.

"Ah, that will not satisfy the governor," he declared. "We will be obliged to detain you for awhile."

"What do you mean?" asked Frank, angrily.

"You are under arrest."

The young inventor felt like pitching the ignorant fellow out of the boat. But he restrained his anger.

"If you dare to lock us up in your dirty old castle!" he cried, impressively, "your government shall pay damages. I warn you! I am an American citizen, and you maltreat me at your peril!"

The Spaniard only laughed in an insolent fashion. The launch was steering straight for Moro Castle.

It was of no use to argue with the ignorant commander. Frank knew this, so he said nothing.

The result was that the whole party were, a very short while later, incarcerated in dingy, dark dungeons in Moro Castle, that fortress whose walls have witnessed many a case of wrongful imprisonment and execution.

Frank's first move was to send for the American consul.

The latter came in haste and attempted to reason with the governor of the castle.

"These gentlemen are American citizens," he declared, "they have been traveling around the world in their air-ship and met with a misfor-

tune here in your harbor. Instead of locking them up you should politely extend them courtesy and aid to reach home."

But the governor was sure that he had captured some mortal foes and insisted upon a trial.

The consul as well as Frank knew the character of a Cuban trial too well. It would consist merely of a hearing of the officer's story, and an order to shoot the prisoners for safety's sake.

"We deny your right to a trial!" cried the consul, angrily. "The U. S. ship of war Kearsarge is now in your harbor. I shall first cable our Secretary of State, and upon receiving his reply I shall go aboard the Kearsarge and you will have a war with the United States upon your hands!"

But yet the authorities were obdurate.

That night the prisoners spent in their dungeons. The next noon the consul again appeared.

This time he had a cablegram from Washington. Thus it read:

"GOVERNOR OF MORO CASTLE, HAVANA: "By order of our consul, please to release at once citizens of United States now in your custody. This country is responsible for their good conduct."

"Signed: BLAINE, Secretary of State."

"WASHINGTON, D. C., U. S. A."

But even this did not seem to have the desired effect. Not until the consul had actually boarded the Kearsarge and it exposed its battery to Moro Castle did the ignorant officials yield.

"Confound 'em!" cried the master of the ship, "if they don't come to terms in twenty minutes I'll batter their old barracks to the ground!"

But this did not become necessary.

The signal appeared on the tower of the castle. The prisoners were escorted by a guard to the quay, where they boarded an American steamer for New York.

This last thrilling incident terminated the interesting adventures of our voyagers north and south around the world.

A short while later they were on Yankee soil. But their fame had preceded them, and a great crowd was ready to welcome them home.

Thousands of warm friends met them, and a general ovation was the result.

But not until he was safe home in Readestown did Frank Reade, Jr., draw a genuine breath of relief.

The mighty undertaking was ended.

It might be said that it was highly successful, though the air-ship was lost. It lay at the bottom of the harbor of Havana.

Frank had no intention of trying to raise it. The damage to the machinery by the water would obviate its practical use thereafter, and would not warrant the expense of raising.

But he declared:

"I will build another and better one sometime. I have not done yet."

However, it was likely that the achievement of traveling around the world, north and south, would never cease to be regarded as Frank's most famous feat.

Barney and Pomp were the most pleased to get home.

They at once resumed their Readestown life with a relish. Two happier or more genial characters it would not be easy to find.

As for Dr. Vaneyke, he had only the memory of his wonderful research left. All his valuable specimens were at the bottom of the sea.

Nevertheless, he was able to give many interesting lectures upon the trip, and the data he was able to furnish proved of inestimable value to the scientific world.

And thus we draw our story to its close. Many strange narratives have been written, but as far as facts go, the reader will certainly agree that Frank Reade, Jr.'s, trip north and south around the world stands without a parallel.

[THE END.]

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